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THE COUNTRY CHURCH AND THE RURAL PROBLEM

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The Country Church and the Rural Problem

The Carew Lectures at Hartford
Theological Seminary
1909

By
22337
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INTRODUCTION

The country church faces a crisis. The agriculture of the nineteenth century was individualistic, extensive, even exploitative, and only toward the close of the period developed highly organized commercial aspects. During the present century American agriculture promises to be put upon an intensive and scientific basis, co-operation will begin to supersede individual bargaining, and the welfare of the rural community instead of the profit of the individual farmer will be more and more the point of departure in all discussions and movements for rural betterment.

The church, too, as it served the farming classes has been individualistic in its appeal. Its work has been one of extension; it has marched to the frontier with the frontiersman. It has even been exploitative of denominational pride and power. Undeniably it has done a great work. It has saved rural life for moral and spiritual ends.

But the country church, with occasional local exception, is not responding to the de-

mands which the new type of agriculture and country life is making upon spiritual forces, nor to the new social point of view that regards the rural problem as a unit. Under the old view the church had a distinct mission, to save souls, a mission apparently unrelated to the industrial or social conditions environing those souls. We see now that the rural problem is one question, with several notable aspects. These aspects are not unrelated to one another, but are correlated. One of these aspects is the religious, or spiritual. The church, as the guardian of the religious life, thus plays a part in a movement larger than itself.

We come then to the principle that the church is vital to the solution of the rural problem, because the things the church stands for are vital to a permanent rural civilization. Church and industry are intimately bound together. The rural church cannot thrive for long unless the agricultural business thrives. But on even higher grounds we see that the same principle applies. The church is but a means to an end. It is a servant of human welfare. In so far as business prosperity, education, social life make for human welfare, just so far are they allies of the church.

The crisis in the country church consists in the question, Has it the power to meet the new demand, so utterly different from the old in many essential phases, although the same in respect to the abiding needs of the human heart?

It is the conviction of these fundamental ideas, namely, the unity of the rural problem, the absolute necessity of utilizing the church in solving the rural problem, and the need of a new point of view on the part of the church if it is to do its part in solving the problem, that has led to the present volume. It is hoped that it may be an encouragement to pastors already in the rural field and an incentive to virile young men who love a hard but great task, and indeed may be of interest to public-spirited and thoughtful laymen in the rural churches.

It may be well to say that this book comprises a series of lectures, with all the limitations as to illustrative details, scope, and volume that such a lecture course involves. It is not, therefore, intended to be an exhaustive treatise upon this new but vital theme. Nor is it designed as a practical guide for clergymen in the details of parish work. The author has

endeavored merely to touch the most significant aspects of the problem of relating the church to the general movement for rural betterment.

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I

THE RURAL PROBLEM

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IMPORTANCE OF THE FOOD SUPPLY

When Jesus announced to hearts overburdened with the cares of the daily toil that the birds of the heaven and the lilies of the field are the patterns for our industry, we can hardly believe that he intended to encourage thriftlessness or to abolish labor for bread. He was seeking to give proper proportion to human desires. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? are age-long queries. When men come to the full life of the spirit and when human justice is supreme, no doubt the ideal of Jesus will be realized and these questions will become incidental or at least subordinated to the quest for righteousness, and perhaps will be answered with less of sweat and moil than now.

But even in that great day the task of supplying these needs will be a fundamental labor, because they are primal needs. The food supply of any country bears an intimate relation to the development of all its industries. And

in spite of the qualifications necessary to the original Malthusian doctrine of population, it is mere truism to assert that ultimately the food supply will govern with an iron hand the extent of the world's population. As a present problem, the question of food supply becomes necessarily more important under a régime of urban life and of highly specialized industries, both of these accompanied by a constantly rising standard of living. Under such conditions the workers not on the land demand abundant food at a moderate price, good in quality, in great variety, and regular in supply. Not only their physical vitality and their efficiency as individual workers, but their social integrity as well, are tied up with the food question. Of course the cost of production of manufactured goods is determined in large part by the cost of food. Consequently the whole industrial and social order under modern conditions is rooted in an adequate food supply.

Now the chief source of food so far made available is the soil, carefully tilled and utilized for the growing of plants either for direct human consumption or for food for animals which in turn become human food. The men

who till the soil then are responsible for large human destinies. They bear the world on their shoulders. How well they perform their task is a matter of supreme concern to the human race as a whole. Living in a region of the earth where the food supply is abundant, we fail to appreciate how even now the mere demand for common daily bread presses hard upon the world's furrows. In our own land we have been so well fed that we have given little heed to this problem. But today there is a school of prophets warning us of the need to conserve soil fertility, to use our land more intelligently, lest within a few generations we cannot feed and clothe our own increasing population. Students of the subject assure us that statistics indicate already a slight decrease in the ratio of production to population, in recent years, in the United States.[1]

The Psalmist's test of the Lord's favor for Zion lay in the promise, "I will abundantly

[1] Since these words were written, the question of higher cost of living not only has become a topic of general discussion, but has had important political consequences. Economists seem to agree that the increase of gold supply is a large factor in increased prices; without doubt our system of distributing farm products is expensive; yet the question of production of food as related to population can by no means be left entirely out of account in the discussion.

bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread." In any event, the question of food supply in America is a fundamental human question. It is essentially a rural problem because the people who furnish the food are the rural people.

AGRICULTURE AS A NATIONAL BUSINESS ASSET

Since the Civil War the tremendous growth of American manufacturing, the construction of railway lines, the organization of great financial concerns have captured our imaginations, and we have come to think of the agricultural industry as a matter of decreasing importance. This view is especially noticeable in southern New England and several other eastern states, where the cities contain most of the population, and where huge manufacturing enterprises have concentrated. Relative to our total industry agriculture occupies a less prominent place than it did half a century ago. But it is still our largest single industry, having greater real capitalization, larger net value of product, and employing more workers, than any other industry. Moreover, it is growing constantly and rapidly. In spite of occasional depressions and of retrogressions in places, it

goes steadily forward. The value of farm property and the farm values of agricultural products have increased materially during every decade of our history as a nation.

It is not only in the aggregate, but also in specific relations to our business life, that American agriculture is significant. For instance, agriculture furnishes about four-fifths of the raw material for our manufactured products. Directly and indirectly it prepares a vast freightage for transportation companies. It profoundly influences our foreign commerce. It has the most intimate relation to our great financial institutions. Its success or failure bears fundamentally upon general business conditions. One-third of our workers are workers of land; they are also consumers of manufactures. Thus from whatever angle we may view it, the business of farming in America stands out as a great essential business—the greatest American business in fact. Whether it is always to occupy this position we cannot say. But it is beyond dispute that it will always be one of our largest business interests, because of the pressure for food caused by an increasing city population, and because of our heritage of rich soil and varied climate.

It hardly seems necessary to remark that the implications of these facts involve vital economic questions. You cannot admit the importance of the agricultural industry and then quietly ignore it in movements for economic advancement and adjustment. Agriculture looms up therefore as a prime economic interest in American progress.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RURAL POPULATION

Of course, in any broad discussion of a question like this the matter of ultimate human welfare is of far more concern to us than anything relating to wealth, even if we have to admit the fundamental character of the economic questions; though in a true analysis we shall hardly draw a sharp line of cleavage between wealth and welfare. For it is a sound tenet of ethics that we must acquire wealth on terms not subversive of individual and national character; and we must use our wealth to procure food for the spirit. Nevertheless it becomes convenient to leave for a moment the purely economic aspect of the rural problem, and to suggest some considerations that bear upon its social side. In doing so, however, it should be remarked that in any industry so

important as agriculture, the industrial skill and intelligence and the economic prosperity of the workers must not only have a vital relationship to the industrial welfare of the nation, but must have an important bearing upon the quality of the people of the entire nation.

Mere mass is not a final test of significance. Yet one can hardly contemplate the fact that nearly forty millions of our American people live under conditions that are essentially rural without being impressed by the important rôle those millions must necessarily play in our national life. There is no likelihood that the total number of rural people will ever be less than now. Anything, therefore, that affects their characters, fortunes, intelligence, power, modes of living, ideals, and aspirations must of necessity bear important relations to national welfare. Certainly, even if we cannot concede the immediate significance of rural social questions as compared with the urgent problems of city life, we must, in the long look ahead, admit the tremendous importance to be attached to the permanent status of so large a fraction of our people as the rural element must always represent.

Consider for example the matter of political power. It is commonly asserted that our cities already dominate the government, and that in a short time they will be absolute masters of the political situation. In the East, where the great cities have grown up in states with a comparatively small rural population, this may be true. Yet it is to be observed that the country towns in states like Connecticut and Rhode Island still hold power out of all proportion to their numerical strength and are not likely to relinquish it in the near future. Furthermore, under our system of election districts, the rural vote dominates in the majority of these districts in the election of members of our legislatures and of the Congress, and in many other districts holds the balance of power. It is true, and perhaps fortunate, that this great power is rarely used by the farmers avowedly for class purposes. The potential political strength, however, of the farming class is such, and for many decades to come will be such, that the political beliefs and political honesty of our rural electorate become a matter of first importance. Great tides of economic and social opinion, so far as they may be crystallized into legislation, may

find their ebb and flow determined in large degree by the character of the rural mind. Personally I am convinced, for instance, that state socialism will never appeal to our farmers, so long as the majority of them are landowners. Hence their economic status and their political perceptions may determine the final outcome of the socialist movement in this country. The recent prohibition movement was largely a rural movement.

Inasmuch as the open country still furnishes and always will furnish an army of recruits for the cities, it is to the interest of these cities to see that the general level of intelligence shall be maintained in the rural communities. So is it with motives, morals, ideals of personal and neighborhood life.

Thus the possession by the rural people of popular intelligence, of the power of response to new ideals, of integrity of thought and character, of democratic instincts, of appreciation of new economic and social problems becomes a matter of first concern to the nation at large.

IS AGRICULTURE DECLINING?

I have already said that there is no likelihood that the number of rural people will

ever be less than now. There can be no doubt that, *relatively*, agriculture as an industry and the number of persons engaged in rural pursuits are declining. This fact has led some thinkers to the apparent conclusion that because urban population and industry are eventually to be the more dominant features of our civilization, rural industry and rural population must become minor factors in American life. Indeed this idea leads some to suppose that the temper of rural life is to be one of decadence. Of course the very fact that agriculture as an industry has not advanced so rapidly as manufacturing is a cause for some concern; although the business of agriculture as a whole is now so flourishing that we are not much given to worry about it. What causes still greater concern is the small return that comes to the average farmer for his labor and use of capital. This is a matter of first importance in a business so large as that of agriculture. We cannot afford to have on our land a class of workers generally underpaid. But let us dwell for a moment upon this question of the numbers of rural residents. Josiah Strong states that the tendency cityward will persist because fewer men than

formerly are needed on our farms to produce the food required by the city dwellers.[1] There is no doubt about the general principle; but there are some important qualifications to it. In the first place, the very fact of city growth makes constantly new demands upon agriculture. The more people who must buy their food, the greater the supply needed. Higher standards of living also require higher grades of food products. True, it is a well-known economic law that the proportion of income spent for food decreases as the income increases. But the *total amount* spent for food does increase with general growth of population; besides, the increased expenditures for other things, if made in purchase of the results of productive enterprise, create a new and considerable, if indirect, demand for more food, on the part of the workers thus given new employment. Another qualification lies in the fact that while the product per agricultural worker has steadily increased, a great part of our enlarged food supply in America has come from the use of new areas. We are passing rapidly out of this condition. While millions of acres are yet to be redeemed by irrigation,

[1] *The Challenge of the City*, 35.

and other millions by drainage, the era of great farm land expansion has passed. Of the two processes, it is vastly easier as a practical matter to increase production by the use of new land than by better use of the old. We have then a rapidly increasing non-agricultural population, coincident with a check in the supply of new agricultural land. More scientific farming is to be the outcome. Each farm worker will produce more than now; but it does not necessarily follow that less than the present number of workers will be needed on our farms. In fact, it is probable that the number of agricultural workers and consequently of the rural population will slowly but steadily increase for an indefinite period of time.

WHEREIN IS THERE A RURAL PROBLEM?

We have tried to show how important are the agricultural industry and the rural population as factors in our American business and life. It is now pertinent to inquire whether there is such a thing as "a rural problem." Are there tendencies likely to injure the business or to render the people less efficient? Are there forces at work which may affect the relationship of agriculture to national life? No

doubt there are special difficulties in farming. Is there one large rural question?

There are several ways by which these questions may be approached. We might discuss the local and individual problems which manifest themselves in ordinary farm communities in different parts of the country, and from a sufficient study of these problems present a general proposition relative to the agricultural situation. We might take up the main deficiencies of country life, in some orderly fashion, and discuss their meaning and correctives. We might attempt a purely scientific analysis of the problem in its fundamental aspects. I have chosen to combine all of these methods after a fashion, by outlining a series of propositions which it seems to me are fundamental, and by illustrations endeavoring to touch the most important difficulties that beset agriculture, whether viewed from the national or from the private point of view. It will be observed that a rough grouping of these propositions brings them into two main classes—those that have a bearing peculiarly industrial or economic, and those that deal with the larger social aspects of country life. Then I purpose to summarize by stating in specific terms the

total rural problem in its large national character.

I. *We must put all our land to its best possible use, as rapidly as it may be needed, at the same time conserving its fertility.* This proposition seems sufficiently evident without argument, but in practice it is not simple. It is of course fundamental. Eventually the world's food supply will depend on the faithfulness with which this principle is applied. Even now there is need that it should be invoked in some regions of our country, as for instance in New England. New England should produce a far larger proportion of what it consumes, not only of fruit, poultry, and vegetables, but even of meat. Some time the dominance of New England's manufacturing interests may come to depend upon the success with which it can buy food for its artisans out of its own pocket as it were.

There are perhaps four essentials in a policy that seeks to apply this principle of adapting the land to its best use:

1. Adaptation of the land to those crops which it can best produce.

In a rough way the American farmer has done precisely this thing. The wheat belt,

the corn belt, the cotton belt, the fruit belts, the sugar-beet belt are the results of this adaptation. In the future, however, an approximate or rough adaptation will not answer—it must be accurate, scientific. The number of cultivated crops is sure to increase rapidly. New varieties will demand special environment. Competition between lands will force the very best use of each acre. Minute conditions of soil texture, slope, drainage, rainfall, frost line, sunshine are already considerations in intensive farming, and will dominate more and more widely.

An interesting illustration of the need of applying this principle is found in the forestry movement in New England. These rocky New England hills are hardly excelled in America as prolific tree-growing regions. There can be no doubt about the possibilities of this area for scientific forestry. But forest trees are not the only trees that do well in New England. Fruit trees, notably apple trees, grow just as well. Moreover, New England shares with Michigan, northern New York, and eastern Canada the distinction of producing the finest flavored apples in America, perhaps in the world. Yet New England produces very few

first-class apples. Here is a chance for adaptation that should not be neglected.

When we say that all land should be put to its best use we may not leave out of account the fact that beauty has its place in land adaptation. We are yet crude in our ideas of public aesthetics. But in attempting to adapt the land of a given area to its best uses, there is no reason why we should not deliberately plan to make that area beautiful to the eye.

2. Adaptation to market conditions.

As between two crops to which any area of land is equally well adapted by reason of soil and climate, that necessarily will be chosen which the better supplies the available market. The "available market" is an elastic term. It may be the adjoining village, the distant metropolis, a foreign country. This market is made not merely by the desire of certain consumers for certain articles of food, but by the facilities of transportation from farm to city, by the agencies of distribution at the market center, by competition of distant areas, by the consumers' demands for color, or size, or packing, and by an intangible but very effective factor, popular notions about products. To use again our apple illustration: There is virtually no

satisfactory market for New England apples, although many thousands of barrels of apples are annually grown in the New England states. The machinery of distribution, developed by the enterprising producers of the Pacific coast, has co-operated with a skilfully educated public sentiment to give the apples of the far Northwest the first place in the best retail apple trade. Color is more easily recognized than quality. Attractiveness of packing plays a large rôle. The quantity of prime fruit must be sufficient to invite the competition of buyers. New England apple-growers must compel the public to make a new estimate of their products before the machinery of the market will be effectively available for their use.

This necessity of adaptation of areas to market demands is especially strong in regions where land is not fitted for the growing of the great staple crops. We have then the need of adaptation both to the general and the special market. It should be noted that adaptation to the market does not imply acquiescence on the part of the farmer in the defective organization of our methods of distribution of products. There are actual market conditions that

must be met; there are improvements in the market that may be made.

3. Adaptation of farm practice to scientific methods of production.

There has been a revolutionary change in the best farm practice, during the past twenty years, due almost wholly to the results of the labors of agricultural experiment stations and agricultural colleges. The end is not yet. Within five years the expert corn-growers of the West have found that they had not been getting the yields that they might easily obtain through careful selection of the seed corn. The business of dairying has been entirely changed since the invention of the Babcock test for butter fat and of the cream separator, and the appreciation of the function of bacteria. Perhaps the men who have shown the very highest degree of skill in adapting their methods to the new knowledge are the growers of vegetables and flowers under glass.

This principle of adaptation to modern scientific knowledge has far-reaching economic consequences. Only the intelligent and the alert will quickly take up with the new things. As these demonstrate the value of the new, others will fall into line. Gradually the com-

mon practice will be lifted to a higher level. But meantime the alert and intelligent, here as elsewhere, have put the less fortunate at a disadvantage. Moreover, there is always a huge body of workers of the soil who live "from hand to mouth," use merely traditional methods, and are forever on the verge of failure. The point is this: The intelligent use of modern methods of farming makes it increasingly difficult for the inefficient farmer to keep up his relative status.

4. Adaptation of farm management to the most approved business practice.

Farming for so long a period was a non-business pursuit, merely a means of providing at first hand the necessaries of life, that the masses of farmers have been very slow to organize their operations on a strictly business basis. Moreover, in many cases the operations are so small in amount and so simple in character that the need for business methods is not always apparent. As a small farmer once remarked to me, "I have forty acres of land; I produce my crops by as intelligent methods as I know; I sell them in the regular market when I think the price is at its best. I usually have a surplus left, and that is my profit. What is

the use of keeping a complicated book account of all the operations?" One can readily appreciate this point of view. Nevertheless, agriculture in general needs to be put upon a far more business-like basis than that on which it rests today.

There is an important reservation in the application of this general principle of adaptation, namely, that the land shall be used as rapidly as it may be needed. Practically this matter is now beyond our control. It takes care of itself. But if it had been recognized in the early land legislation of our country an era of serious agricultural depression and discontent might have been avoided. It is doubtless true that the land policy of the government is responsible for the rapid development of the West. It resulted in an abundance of cheap food at a time when manufacturing was struggling to its feet. But on the other hand, we endured two decades of overdevelopment of land use which not only brought serious consequences to the eastern farmers, but which was also the cause of the "farmers' movements" of the period from 1870 to 1893. The homestead laws were based on a conception of farming perfectly valid when they were first

enacted—that a farm is a self-supporting home. But unfortunately the great demand that "Uncle Sam should give us all a farm" reached its height at a time when agriculture was being put on a commercial basis because of city growth and distant transportation, while farm machinery used on the richest virgin soils in the world brought about a production far in excess of even the new demand. This phenomenon will not occur again. We are beginning to see the era of land scarcity. Yet the principle is important.

Another vital consideration is that, while land must be put to its very best use, and in fact used to its full capacity, it must be treated in such a way that its natural fertility shall be fully conserved, if not increased. The history of land has been largely a story of exploitation of soil fertility. The human race has marched westward, occupying new and rich lands and leaving behind in many cases desert areas once fertile. The changes occurring in wheat-growing areas are a case in point. Even in America, young as it is, this reckless exploitation of soil fertility has gone on. It is nothing less than criminal to handicap future generations with a depleted soil, because it is not

necessary. We have simply been wasteful and foolish.

We have stated this first proposition concerning the use of land at some length, because it is so fundamental. Other propositions flow in part from this one, and are of much significance, but considerations of space compel their development with greater brevity.

II. *There must be a reasonable financial return to the masses of workers of the soil, as well as opportunity for fairly large rewards for special skill.* It is not enough that a few highly intelligent farmers can make a "good living" on the farm. It is necessary that as a class workers of the soil, of fair intelligence and skill, may be able to secure a decent living—a living adequate for the maintenance of the standards of life prevalent in the nation generally. If this condition of affairs cannot be brought about, the farming class will sooner or later sink into an inferior economic status. It is stimulating to read the huge figures relating to our farm values, but those who have determined the returns per unit of our farm capital, and the rewards to each farm worker, tell us that we confront a situation that is not reassuring. Furthermore, while agriculture can

never yield the large rewards that sometimes flow from speculative or quasi-speculative enterprises, it is necessary that the men of force and superior intelligence who devote themselves to farming may secure a reward in some degree commensurate with the effort expended. If this be not possible, agriculture must constantly be weakened by loss of leadership.

III. *There must be an efficient means of distribution of soil products.* This is by no means the case at present in America. It is quite true that the railways have wrought wonders by their cheap rates for long-distance hauls, their methods of refrigeration, and so on. But the nearby farmer has been consistently sacrificed in the interests of the long haul, and in fact the very perfection of this long-distance system has overstimulated specialized production for a far-away market.

But far less efficient than the transportation machinery is the present method of handling products, particularly specialized products, between the producer and consumer. The difference between the farm price and the cost to consumer on the whole range of plant and animal products is altogether too great. There are too many middlemen. As a class they obtain

rewards out of all proportion to their service. California raisins retailing in the East for 15 cents a pound give a gross return to the grower of only 3 or $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents. The use of his land, the labor, his own services as manager must come out of the three cents a pound. Twelve cents go to a group of people who have a vital function in placing the raisins where they are needed, but the reward is disproportionate. It is a clumsy system. It must be vastly improved.

IV. *The land should in general be owned by those who till it.* This is not to be construed to mean that only one man and his family shall in all cases work a single farm. We must leave room for an enterprise sufficiently large to utilize some additional labor, but we do not desire a general condition of even resident landlordism, implying vast areas managed by one owner and worked by a large body of wage-earners. Not that such instances should not exist, but they should not be the prevailing type.

The tendency of landownership in Europe has been toward one of two extremes—large holdings, often by absentee owners, and minute holdings worked largely by the hand labor of the owner and his family. It has been shown

that efficient farming is possible under both systems—the industrial results may be good, though they are not always so under the landlord system, any more than under an ignorant peasant system. But as a rule the social results of either plan at its extreme are bad—worse under the landlord system probably. Landownership gives community interest and is vital to permanent rural civilization.

It is at this point that the question of foreign immigration has an important bearing. If American standards of living are to prevail among the members of the agricultural class, there is little danger among us of developing a general peasant régime; there is greater danger of unduly large holdings, particularly in the rich areas of the middle country north and south. But if it should come about that hordes of peasants from abroad should settle upon our lands more rapidly than the somewhat sluggish social machinery of rural life can grind the grist, American standards would be superseded by lower standards and a system of peasantry would shortly be inaugurated.

Dr. Max Weber of Heidelberg has remarked,[1]

[1] See *Report of the Congress of Arts and Science*, Universal Exposition (St. Louis, 1904), VII, 745.

with reference to a possible contingency here similar to that which Europe has faced, that

the diminution of the agricultural operations in the wheat-producing states results, at present, from the growing intensity of the operation and from division of labor. But also the number of negro farms is growing, and the migration from the country to the cities. If, thereby, the expansive power of the Anglo-Saxon-German settlement of the rural districts and, besides, the number of children of the old, inborn population are on the wane, and if, at the same time, the enormous immigration of uncivilized elements from Eastern Europe grows, also here a rural population might soon arise which could not be assimilated by the historically transmitted culture of this country: this population would change forever the standard of the United States, and would gradually form a community of a quite different type from the great creation of the Anglo-Saxon spirit.

V. *The social strength of the farming class must be conserved.* It is vitally important in the development of American civilization that a class of people numerically so great as our farmers shall maintain standards of individual and social strength consistent with our civilization. This may be expressed as the need for conservation of social power, and is made up of at least the following elements:

1. High intelligence—sufficiently high at

least to represent average American life, not only in general qualities, but with respect to questions of business, politics, sanitation, and community life as a whole.

2. Organizing capacity. No large class of people can attain its full development in a civilization that is at once democratic and increasingly self-directing, unless it shows a power to combine large numbers of individuals for both class ends and national needs.

3. Political efficiency. We have already dwelt upon the present political influence of the agricultural classes. It is important therefore that this great power shall be exercised by men who appreciate the significance of the vital problems of the age, who are honest in their expression of opinion, wise in the choice of their political representatives, and who have the mind to fulfil their obligations as voters.

4. Culture and refinement. The farming class is relatively isolated, and will always be more or less segregated from other classes. But it would be unfortunate if the time came when the rural man or woman was of a type so distinctive as to be out of harmony with our accepted standards. Rusticity of mind or of manners must not be a feature of rural life.

5. Active and healthy moral and spiritual life. This point of course needs no argument or illustration, but gains its force as a statement from the fact that under rural conditions this need may require special direction and encouragement.

VI. *The rural community must be served by efficient social institutions, adapted to the peculiar needs of rural life.* The three great classes of institutions are the church and allied agencies of religion, the schools and other means of education, and the voluntary organizations and co-operative associations for various ends. All these must be efficient for their purpose, developed to meet the special needs that arise under the rural conditions. We may leave further discussion of this point to another chapter.

VII. *A clear and high ideal for rural community life must be developed and maintained.* We have heretofore allowed a *laissez-faire* policy to prevail with respect to a general movement for the betterment of rural conditions. The two great exceptions to this statement, namely, the growth of the great farmers' organizations and the development of special educational agencies under government con-

trol, have not as a matter of fact supplied adequate ideals for the reorganization of rural life. We need a new vision of what this reorganization means. We need a picture of ideal rural life applicable on a large scale. In succeeding chapters we shall have occasion to review this proposition with some fulness. Suffice to say here that it must be regarded as after all the most significant need in rural life.

An endeavor has been made to name as briefly as possible the reasons why there is a rural problem. A little study of each one of the seven propositions just laid down will reveal serious defects in our agricultural industry and community life, and indicate the most important steps toward amelioration. Doubtless a more complete analysis of the problem would include other significant considerations. But all these questions are intrinsic and fundamental. With respect to them, our agriculture is not in a wholly satisfactory condition. There undoubtedly is a rural problem.

STATEMENT OF THE ULTIMATE RURAL PROBLEM

You will observe that the rural problem has been described by a series of propositions which

have developed both defects and remedies. But the query now arises, Is there not some simple statement which at once goes to the root of the matter, and which will reveal the real unity of the problem, if there be any such unity? It is precisely to this end that the foregoing discussion has been directed. To put the response to the query in its briefest form, we may say that *the rural problem is to maintain upon our land a class of people whose status in our society fairly represents American ideals—industrial, political, social, and ethical.*

This statement at once brings before us a picture of an American civilization in which the special problems confronting those who till the soil and furnish our food have been worked out in terms of class efficiency and of national welfare. It implies that the rural question is an organic part of the question of our national life as a whole. It signifies that the interests of the city itself are vitally connected with the rural welfare. It means that everyone interested in agricultural progress must grasp this underlying philosophy as a directing force in all partial movements for improvement.

I desire to call particular attention to two further implications of this analysis and statement of the rural problem: First, that the industrial factor is essential. We who deal with things of the mind and spirit need especially to recognize that a successful agricultural industry is the first term in the formula for developing class power. Second, that the ultimate problem is by no means wholly one of material prosperity, but is after all another phase of the great problem of human welfare and national destiny. Those whose task it is to assist in improving methods of agriculture and those actually engaged in the business of farming need especially to recognize that, important as is business success, it needs to be transmuted into intellectual and moral power and eventuate in a satisfactory community life.

May I close this discussion of the rural problem by two important statements from others —one made by an acute student of city life, and the other by a body of men who have had special opportunities for study of the rural question in its broadest aspects?

Dr. Frederick C. Howe has said[1] that the

[1] *The City, the Hope of Democracy*, 9.

coming of the modern city "has destroyed a rural society, whose making has occupied mankind since the fall of Rome." Even so, there still remain the land and the land-tiller. There is still life under rural conditions, and there must always be. Thus our problem is to reconstruct that important part of our civilization which is still rural in the light of a new civilization that is to be dominantly urban, and to do it in such a way that the two types may blend in one coherent American society.

The Commission on Country Life states "the underlying problem of country life" as follows:

> The mere enumeration of the foregoing deficiencies and remedies indicates that the problem of country life is one of reconstruction, and that temporary measures and defense work alone will not solve it. The underlying problem is to develop and maintain on our farms a civilization in full harmony with the best American ideals. To build up and retain this civilization means, first of all, that the business of agriculture must be made to yield a reasonable return to those who follow it intelligently; and life on the farm must be made permanently satisfying to intelligent, progressive people. The work before us, therefore, is nothing more nor less than the gradual rebuilding of

a new agriculture and new rural life. We regard it as absolutely essential that this great general work should be understood by all the people. Separate difficulties, important as they are, must be studied and worked out in the light of the greater fundamental problem.

II

THE SOLUTION OF THE RURAL PROBLEM

In the previous chapter an endeavor was made to reach the heart of the rural problem by indicating the significance of agriculture and country life, in terms of the food supply, and with respect to agriculture as a business asset, and the importance of the social or human side of the question, as shown by the part which our large rural population inevitably must play in our national civilization.

The real character of the fundamental aspects of the rural problem was developed by laying down certain propositions, namely, that we must use all our land in the best possible way; that there must be a reasonable financial return to workers of the soil; that there must be better means of distributing the products of the soil; that the land in general ought to be owned by those who till it; that the social strength of the farming class must be conserved; that the country must have efficient social institutions; that a clear and high ideal for

rural life must be developed and maintained. And finally we said that it all comes to this, that the total rural problem is nothing more nor less than to develop a new rural civilization; to build up and maintain upon our land a class of people whose status in the national life fairly reaches American ideals—industrial, political, and social.

Our task in this chapter is to attempt the statement of those general principles by which the problem as now understood may be solved. We do not purpose to go into details with respect to methods, but rather to enunciate those main considerations which must govern in the working-out of rural effort. We shall, therefore, keep in mind chiefly the ultimate aspects of the problem; for the more important local and immediate questions—such as the prosperity of a given agricultural community, the labors of special institutions, and the development of practical means of neighborhood progress—will, in our judgment, find their answers in the appropriate application of this large, general program.

Let it be said at the outset that *there is no panacea for the rural problem.* It is not a simple problem; and the remedy is not simple. We

do not offer single cures for special difficulties. The rural problem is a unit; its various aspects overlap. We are not to forget this unity, for that is the starting-point. So when we come to discuss solutions, we are to remember that the different principles to be utilized may be worked out through different institutions. Thus the church has an educational function; the school has a character-building function; yet we must differentiate between the two main tasks of the school and the church. This word may, however, be said: that inasmuch as the ultimate problem is essentially social, so the forces to be utilized for the direction of rural development are social. We must reach the mass of individual farmers through the machinery of social agencies. We cannot leave the problem to the chances of merely individual initiative. On the other hand, we cannot consciously direct *all* the forces that are to determine the final status of the American farmer. Even if we clearly perceive the goal, we cannot always detect the great currents that are carrying us toward it. It is not within human power to shape the channels of social evolution with the skill of an engineer. The most that we can do is to call attention to the

desired ends and to set in motion those forces within our control which we think will most fully enable rural society to reach its goal.

The main agencies or principles that are to be utilized in the solution of the rural problem may be classified into five groups, which present genuine needs, and to a large degree real deficiencies, in our country life. They are as follows: (1) socialization; (2) education; (3) organization; (4) religious idealism; (5) federation of forces.

I. SOCIALIZATION

By socialization is meant in general the breaking-down of the extreme individualism which exists in most of our country life and is, in fact, engendered by the farmer's mode of living, and the bringing-together of these independent individual elements into a more coherent social group. If I were asked to indicate the main difference between urban life and rural life, I should say that the characteristic feature of city life is the congestion of population; while the characteristic feature of country life is the isolation of its people. This simple distinction is fundamental in its sociological bearings. In the country the farming class is

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largely isolated from other classes; families are in a large measure isolated from other families. True, isolation in its psychical and social effects is a relative and not an absolute condition. Nevertheless the sparse population of the country, as compared to that of the city, is responsible for the main features of rural life, is the distinguishing social environment of the rural people, and is consequently the main source of difference between rural and urban ideals.

It is hardly necessary to state that both good and bad results flow from this isolation of the farming people. Undoubtedly it makes for strong individual character, for independence of thought, for initiative and self-reliance, for the development of the meditative habit of mind, for a certain fearlessness of conventionalities, and on the whole for good morals and particularly for a superior family life—nowhere else is family life so educative as in the country. On the other hand, the social results are generally bad. It is difficult to get farmers to work together, because they have so long worked separately. They are suspicious of one another, suspicious of their own leadership, suspicious of other classes. They often drift out of the cur-

rent of the world's thought. They often lack the stimulus of the best leadership. They miss the power of "suggestion," and consequently there is a tendency to stagnate socially. Habits and conventions remain fixed and stand in the way of progress.

Thus at the threshold we have to meet this characteristic fact of comparative isolation in a way to save what is good in it and to obviate what is deleterious in it. In what ways may we meet it? What are the remedies for rural conditions that are essentially non-social? We may consider four.

1. *The development of better means of communication.*—It is unnecessary to dwell on the advantages that have already accrued to our rural population through the establishment of general free rural mail delivery, the installation of rural telephones, the improvement of our highways, and the building of interurban trolley lines. It is true that, as in the case of all other human institutions, there is always something to say on the other side. In some communities rural mail delivery has kept the farmers from coming together for their normal social life at the post-office center; in some instances the rural telephone, under the party

system at least, has provoked a prodigious interest in other people's business, and an equally amazing impoliteness in trying to find it out; the past few years have put a premium on reckless automobile speeding, and have almost driven the farmers' horses from the improved highways; up to the present time, trolley lines running through the country are essentially interurban, and not distinctively rural lines—that is, they are intended to serve the cities and not primarily the country districts through which they run. But in spite of these drawbacks, the general tendency of all these new means of communication, every one of which has developed within a dozen years, has been to re-create rural life. That is a strong phrase, but it is not an exaggeration. In regions where these improvements prevail farmers are in touch with one another as never before. From the business, from the social, and from the intellectual points of view, the pace has been quickened with advantage. We can but hope that in the near future these means of communication will be fully developed in practically every corner of our agricultural area.

In this connection a word should be said in regard to the hamlet system as a means of

socializing our rural people. The prevalence of the hamlet system in some European countries has been used as an argument for the development of a similar plan here. In our southland the hamlet system is being quite frequently advocated by the whites, in order to secure better protection of their families from the negroes of low degree. In the irrigated sections of the West, notably where the Mormons have settled, the village system is a characteristic feature of agricultural life. Even in some parts of New England many farmers live in the smaller villages. By some writers a general adoption of the hamlet system has been advocated.

Undoubtedly there are some advantages attached to the rural hamlet, advantages which are obvious enough upon the surface, and which need no particular elucidation. Personally I have yet to be persuaded that the hamlet system is to be the chief means in America of socializing the farming class. The difficulty of bringing it about is a prime consideration. We started on the other tack; it will take a long time to change. Our American farmers have perhaps three or four billions of dollars invested in farm buildings, most of these buildings being

on separated farms. The task of transferring this property to little centers is a gigantic task. There is also a question as to its necessity. Will not the proper development of the means of communication already referred to, together with more energetic social institutions and more attractive social centers, compass the results sought? Moreover, one may question the desirability of this solution, in spite of the fact that in many cases the existence of the rural hamlet does seem to bring about ideal conditions of country life. In some instances there is evidence that while a rural hamlet tends to socialize the people it also tends to inefficiency in the management of farms. Furthermore, the family life of our farms, under normal conditions, is the glory of our country life. Its efficiency, let it be said, is due in part to a degree of isolation. And finally, while it is hardly fair to assume that the hamlet will develop the same conditions as the very small city or the village, there is a widespread feeling that the average boy is far safer morally either in the country or in the large city than he is in the average village.

2. *Recreation.*—The closest observers of rural life are quite convinced that the recreations of

the country, not only for children but for young people and for adults as well, are grossly inadequate. Farmers themselves are as a rule apparently satisfied with the situation, and, as a matter of fact, if one should take a census of the recreations of the rural people, a long list could be named. But it would also appear that recreation on the whole is inadequate in amount, in variety, and in quality; that the country people do not take sufficient time for play; and that such recreations as exist are unorganized and are not adapted to develop the best phases of character. There are notable exceptions to these general truths, and there are wide variations of conditions, but in general it is safe to say that rural life is lacking in recreation.

The dearth of wholesome amusement for children and youth is particularly noticeable. The movement for organized and educative play for city children may well have its counterpart in the country. Of course spontaneity, native interest, local tradition, and the initiative of child and youth are not to be submerged in a formal, machine-like organization, in the country any more than in the city. The school and the Young Men's Christian Associations

must be relied upon very largely for the development of suitable recreation for the young, and the native rural institutions, such as school, Grange, church, and local club, supplemented at times by some help from outside, must furnish adults with their recreations.

3. *The enrichment of woman's life.*—There are thousands of farm women who live a normal, happy life. The popular impression that the terrible isolation of farm life breeds an undue amount of insanity, especially among the women, is not sustained by the facts. At the same time, it is beyond question that the lot of many a woman on a farm is far from desirable—less desirable than that of the man. So far, we are doing little for the farmer's wife. From one point of view, however, the farm woman is the key to the rural situation. Her status, her intelligence, her happiness, her welfare, her ideals, her intellectual development are, on the farm as elsewhere, the test of civilization, and, if that be possible, even more so on the farm than elsewhere, because of the intimate way in which the work and the life of the farm are bound together. Anything that will enrich family life, anything that will make it more refined, anything that will make

the house labors more easy, anything that will give a larger outlook from the farm home, anything that will minister to the joy and comfort of living under rural conditions must have a profound influence upon the ultimate solution of the farm problem. Here is a field that has virtually been untouched by those interested in rural life, and yet, perhaps, it contains the crux of the situation.

4. *The community-sense, or neighborhood spirit.*—New England has one advantage in this respect, in that the town spirit is a very real thing, and if the town happens to be a farming town it is not difficult to develop the town ambitions and to appeal to town pride. But for the most part farm life is broken up into little neighborhoods, without exact boundaries, without very much coherence, and, in fact, without much to tie people into a real group. Consequently ideals for the development of a community or a given area are difficult of crystallization, because there is not much to crystallize about. Some device should be found, however, by which a nucleus of community pride may be developed, and around which may be gathered those forces of rural progress that will tend to give group unity,

group ambition. If the farmer is to be socialized, it must be done objectively. He must have something to work for that is definite and worth while. Probably this can come about only by a definite propaganda which involves a full program for individual and community betterment, permeated by a sufficient leaven of idealism to stir the imagination and to give moral values to the ends to be striven for by the people themselves. Doubtless some meeting-place for community purposes, like a neighborhood house, will prove to be necessary to the best development of neighborhood spirit.

II. EDUCATION

There are three phases of rural education: first, the acquiring of accurate knowledge about agriculture and country life; second, the education of youth in schools and colleges; and third, the wide dissemination among all people of the knowledge of agriculture and country life.

The acquiring of knowledge.—For many centuries, new knowledge about soil tillage was gained very slowly, by empirical methods largely, and passed with difficulty into common practice. Within a generation institutions in America have been organized for the sole busi-

ness of instituting scientific research into the realm of laws governing agricultural operations, and for experimenting with the practical application of those laws to the soil, the plant, and the animal. This work has been done principally by the United States Department of Agriculture and by the splendid system of agricultural experiment stations, supported in part by the government and in part by the states. A vast fund of information has thus been made available for the use of our farmers, and even though the work is new, so much has been done that it has already had a profound influence upon agricultural practice and consequently upon agricultural production. Of course other tasks have been performed by our experiment stations. They have disseminated the information thus gained through bulletins and lectures; they have assisted the farmers through the inspection of fertilizers and feeding stuffs; but their main work is research and experimentation in the realm of laws governing plant and animal growth. It is safe to say that, great as has been their work, "it has but just begun," to use a common but striking phrase. A distinguished agricultural educator was heard to remark not long

since that in not a single realm of agricultural science do the investigators feel that they have approximated the whole truth. The task of acquiring further knowledge about the laws of plant and animal development and the relation of the soil and other physical facts to that development is fundamental to the education of soil-tillers and to industrial efficiency in agriculture.

Until very recently almost no attention has been given to the scientific study of the economic and social aspects of the business of farming and of the life of the rural people. This neglected field is also to be tilled with thoroughness, and study therein will be as full of rewards for human welfare as the researches of the chemist and biologist.

Still another form of acquiring knowledge is being organized, which promises to be of the utmost consequence in the future development of the industry and life of the country people. At present it goes by the name of an "Agricultural Survey." Heretofore we have dealt very largely with general truths and their wide application. Farmers have been left to apply these truths to their special cases. But we have come to feel that, after all, each indi-

vidual farm has a number of conditions peculiar to itself. While it must ever be true that the individual farm owner or worker shall be responsible for the management of that individual farm, nevertheless much aid can be given him by scientific study of the particular conditions under which he labors. So the next few years will see a large development of agricultural surveys, which shall attempt to collate and systematize information relative to the natural environment of the individual farmer, as of soil, climate, etc.; the more minute economic conditions that govern his work, such as local markets and transportation; the methods of farm management by which he correlates the various factors of production and distribution to his own best advantage; and the social life which represents his spiritual environment, with its contribution to his industrial efficiency and to the enlargement of his own individual spirit.

The development of the school as a means of rural education.—There are two large movements necessary in the growth of schools for the education of the rural people. The first lies with the rural school, i.e., the common public school situated in a rural environment. This

is simply the general problem of education under rural conditions; but inasmuch as these rural conditions differ from urban conditions, it gives rise to a very important question. Put in the briefest form, there are three great difficulties in rural school work: First, to secure a modern school at an expense that is within the reach of the community. For this end state aid must be invoked on the principles that all the wealth of the state must provide for the education of all the youth of the state, and that the country boy and girl are entitled to the best education which the state can afford. Second, to provide adequate high-school facilities. This will have to be done largely by a centralization of schools, and by transporting students either in vans or on trolley lines. Third, to make the school a vital and coherent part of the community life. This is a hard thing to do in the city; it is equally difficult in the country. But the country school should play a far larger part than now in solving the rural problem. It should not merely give to children elements of universal knowledge; it should be a factor in building up the community.

The second movement in rural education is

definite school instruction in agriculture as a vocational subject. The rural schools should of course train boys and girls for life in general, without regard to whether they are to be residents of the city or of the country. But there must also be facilities in the public schools for the preparation of youth for agriculture as a business. At this point there is a great gap in our educational system. We need finishing schools, approximately of secondary grade, in which the leading effort shall be to educate pupils for agriculture and country life. The training in these schools will be avowedly technical, but not wholly so; for it is important to remember that technical skill or knowledge is but a part of preparation for vocation. Both the existing high schools and specially established schools will be utilized for this great work of vocational training in agriculture.

At the present time, our agricultural colleges are the most prominent feature of agricultural instruction. Supported in part by the United States government, and in part by the states, they have for many years been training men for successful agriculture, and also for positions of high responsibility in research and in teaching. It now appears that the fields of

usefulness for men trained in these colleges are constantly increasing in number and variety. A brief summary of the agricultural vocations for which agricultural colleges may prepare would include:

a) Independent farming. This would comprise all of those branches of agriculture and horticulture that have to do with the growing of plants and animals for human use. There is no doubt that the opportunities for college men in this field are developing very rapidly.

b) Vocations connected with agriculture, where expert service is needed by some large enterprise, government or private, such as the Forestry Service, or the superintendency of large estates.

c) Research and teaching along agricultural lines. The demand for men is much beyond the supply, and the development of agricultural high schools is creating a still further demand.

d) Positions in general enterprises more or less dependent upon agriculture, where men with agricultural training are needed for technical and managerial work, such as the canning industries, the fertilizer business, etc.

e) A series of vocations which are really

agricultural in their nature, requiring agricultural training, and in which, too, there are developed leaders in social service, such as teachers in rural communities, rural librarians, rural Y.M.C.A. secretaries, and country clergymen.

Popular education in agriculture.—There is a multitude of ways by which information about agriculture and country life may be given currency among the people at large. The agricultural press of course plays a large part in this movement. Voluntary organizations, such as the Grange and farmers' clubs, assist in distributing new information. There are correspondence courses in agriculture under private auspices. State boards of agriculture have, in a number of states, carried on systems of farmers' institutes which have been of the greatest value in distributing information about new farming. The agricultural colleges are also doing a large work, and must in the future perform an even more important function, in the popular dissemination of agricultural information. This work in a broad way is known as "extension work," and it means the development in organized form of various methods of reaching the farmers, at or near

their homes. It consists of three rather distinct methods, or types of work.

1. Formal teaching, or systematic instruction, which is carried on through well-organized lecture courses, reading and correspondence courses, movable schools, and permanent demonstration plots or farms.

2. Work that is more or less advisory and suggestive, and perhaps not thoroughly organized. It may be done directly by the college, or through the machinery of other organizations. This informal instruction will include the convention, which may be simply a conference, or may be a well-developed system of farmers' institutes; the itinerant lecturer and the traveling adviser; the publication and distribution of a great deal of literature, such as monographs on special subjects, the compilation of useful knowledge, leaflets, press bulletins, personal correspondence, traveling libraries. It would invoke the aid of object-lessons, such as field and platform demonstrations, exhibits and judging at fairs, excursions to the college, co-operative demonstrations and tests, traveling vans, and railway trains.

3. The third type of this extension work may be called "co-ordination," by which an effort is

made to bring together the different agencies representing the rural movement, to hold conferences on rural progress, to co-operate with other agencies, and indeed to stimulate various organizations to do their best work in their respective fields.

Extension work promises to become one of the most important branches of the agricultural college activity, and in fact lies at the basis of a complete educational system for agriculture and country life. The working farmer must be reached on his own farm.

III. ORGANIZATION

The history of agricultural organizations in America is a very interesting one, beginning with the development of the agricultural fairs, the farmers' clubs, etc., and including the great farmers' movement of the last third of the nineteenth century, which arose during the period of general agricultural discontent, and which attempted to combine the entire farming class into one compact organization. It would take us too far afield to describe even briefly these various efforts to secure the group strength of the farmers. It is important, however, not to omit from a discussion of the

rural problem the place which organization fills in its solution. It is a fundamental necessity. It may sound like an echo of the doctrine of brute strength to assert that the farming class, like other classes, needs to assert itself in order to play its part in on-going civilization. I would call your attention to a remark made by Professor Charles H. Cooley:

> The self-assertion of the wage-earning class, so far as it is orderly and pursuant of ideals which all classes share, has commanded not only the respect but the good will of the people at large. Weakness—intrinsic weakness, the failure of the member to assert its function—is instinctively despised. I am so far in sympathy with the struggle for existence as to think that passive kindliness alone, apart from self-assertion, is a demoralizing ideal, or would be if it were likely to become ascendant. But the self which is asserted, the ideal fought for, must be a generous one—involving perhaps self-sacrifice as that is ordinarily understood—or the struggle is degrading.

Organization, then, becomes a test of class efficiency. Has a great class of people like the farmers the power to combine, the intelligence to combine, the will to combine? Organization, moreover, and by the same token, tends to conserve class efficiency. Can the class maintain an organization that enables it to

assert itself, to make itself felt for its own interests and for the interests of the nation?

Organization is also a powerful educational force. Whenever a class of people organizes for a given purpose, it is bound to debate the most fundamental considerations of political and industrial life, and such discussion cannot but be educative in its results. The process is far more educative than to raise merely academic questions. Moreover, farmers, because of their isolation and individualism, particularly need the force of organization to bring them together, to get them to see their problems in a large way. They cannot possibly exert their best influence on national life unless rural public opinion can be crystallized, incarnated, put at work. Of course this will be done to some extent through the ballot box, but it is common knowledge that the ballot box does not give full expression to the social activity of our people.

The social tendency of the age is clearly toward social self-direction. We set up goals for civilization, and we endeavor to organize public opinion in such a way that the goals may be realized. We plan for the direction in which society shall go. This process is just as im-

portant for the farming class as for any other class. It is a mark of progress when a class can organize and determine its course. The fact that other classes are organized is therefore a very good reason why the farmers should organize. They need to organize for self-protection. They need to make themselves felt on behalf of their own interests. There must necessarily be more or less friction between classes. Even a large class of people like the farmers will often have their rights invaded, unless they are in a position to protect themselves. Not only so, but no class of people can in an unorganized form assert itself as a part of the national life. In some way there must be a chance to gather up the group sentiment, the group power, the group opinion, and bring them to bear on the great issues of our common life.

At two points particularly is there great need for adequate organization of the agricultural classes. The present unsatisfactory system of distribution of farm products can never be fully remedied until farmers combine in a systematic and comprehensive fashion for business co-operation. Buying together, selling together, co-operative activities in many minor

neighborhood enterprises, are essential to permanent industrial success in agriculture.

It is also vitally necessary that farmers shall insist upon legislation favorable to their own interests. I do not mean class legislation in an individual sense, but laws that give substantial justice to the farmers as producers. Individual farmers become more and more helpless against the aggressions of capitalism. In the recent tariff discussion in Congress, for instance, there was very little said about the way in which the schedules would affect the farmers. The alleged attempt to monopolize the water power of the nation will have, if successful, a very important bearing upon agricultural welfare.

Of course there are possible disadvantages coming from farmers' organizations. They may emphasize undesirable class distinctions. They may be unwisely led. They may tend to eliminate the individual. These are small things about which we may be cautious. Fundamentally, organization is essential to rural progress and the solution of the rural problem.

Only those who have had something to do with farmers through a period of years can appreciate how difficult it is, however, to de-

velop farmers' organizations. There are the ingrained habits of individual initiative; there is a lack of leadership; there is the fact that those composing the rural class as a whole do not always have a common interest with respect to social ideals, economic needs, or political creeds. Sometimes financial considerations stand in the way; sometimes economic or political fallacies kill off otherwise good organizations; sometimes mere suspicion prevents co-operation.

Organizations for social and educational ends are peculiarly needed, and have been supplied perhaps best of all by the Grange. The Grange has also done something to secure business co-operation. Probably the great development of agricultural organization in the future lies along the lines of business co-operation.

IV. RELIGIOUS IDEALISM

The groundwork of all efforts on behalf of the rural population is after all to establish the highest possible ideals for personal and community life. This idealism ought to permeate all attempts at socialization, all efforts at education, all movements for organization. Necessarily, however, it will be fostered most

completely by the institutions of religion—by the church and its allies. This idealism will, first of all, have to do with the ethics of the situation, with the moral standards and habits of the people. Certainly it is important to the cities as well as to the country that the "righteousness that exalteth a nation" shall be the dominant note in rural life. I do not hesitate to say that this idealism ought to have a religious motive.

But there is another element in this development of rural idealism that needs to be emphasized, the necessity of stimulating a love and appreciation of the rural environment and life. No class of people can succeed long in the country unless they love the country, and this love of the country must be based on something more than mere industrial success. The life of the country is permeated with poetry, not alone because the farmer lives near to Nature, works with Nature constantly, lives his life in an environment that is filled with all the poetry that Nature can yield to man, but because the work itself has a poetic aspect much more easily recognized than, for instance, the labor in a noisy machine shop. I think that the sound of the mowing machine at work in

the June clover is real music. A friend of mine says, "It *is* music, if *you* are not the one who sits on the machine!" There is something in the remark—but then that is prose. Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson, of England, in a recent lecture in this country on "Aesthetics in a Democracy," has called attention to the fact that we cannot have poetry in a democracy until we develop the poetry of industry, and that at present we have practically no poetry of industry. In this connection, he said that agriculture, even with the use of machinery, yields itself more fully than any other industry to the poetic note. Now this poetic phase of country life, not as sentimentalism, not as mere luxury of the senses, but as real, genuine romance and poetry at the heart of things, and as tied up with the processes of agriculture and with the life in the open, must penetrate the souls of the dwellers upon the land.

Doubtless the practical forces of the idealism referred to will be found in setting a definite goal for the community. We may call it "the kingdom of God," we may call it "a new rural civilization," we may simply call it "rural progress," or the idea of having "a better com-

munity"; but there is dire need of recognizing the deficiencies of country life as they actually exist in the country communities, and of having something to work toward. The community life should be made dynamic rather than static. It is only fair to say that any legitimate effort made by any institution to improve rural conditions is sure to involve this idealism. It may not always have a religious motive, but it will be an advantage, a step forward, something worth while. The church ought to welcome the efforts of any agency that will cultivate this spirit of idealism in the country community, among the rural people. At the same time the church is peculiarly the conservator of the highest type of idealism—that which is moved by the religious instinct and belief. The great danger is that the church, with its creeds, its historic setting, its ecclesiastical machinery, may tend to distinguish between what it pleases to call "secular" and "sacred." But this idealism must have organic unity. It ought to minister to the highest things in personal and community life. I believe it cannot have unity, nor hope to inspire the highest life, unless it have religious motive. But be that as it may, this idealism must be one great sweep

of sentiment, of high emotion, that touches heart strings, that directs wills, and that furnishes inspiration for the work and life of the people who live upon the land.

V. FEDERATION OF FORCES

We have now stated what may be regarded as the fundamental principles of improvement in the rural community, each representing a basic need—socialization, education, organization, idealism. To carry out these principles, it is obvious that we must have social agencies, machinery, institutions. It is probable that we already have forces sufficient for all purposes, if properly organized and managed. But again, I say, we must not forget that there is a unity in this farm problem; that while it has many phases and is many sided, after all it is one great problem; and if it is one great problem, there is special need that all the forces that are to be brought to bear upon its solution should work together. There is no panacea for the rural problem. There is no one solution for the difficulty. So we need the co-operation of all agencies and all people. The workers in each branch must understand the whole prob-

lem and the relation of other institutions to it. We must all march forward as one army.

Thus it is that the idea of federating these various forces of socialization, education, organization, and idealism becomes dominant. We need a clearing-house for all rural workers and interests, in order that the ultimate goal of rural life may be kept constantly in mind, and that all workers may square their special labors to the main task. In fine, we need in the country the counterpart of the new movement for "city-planning," a movement which shall be a real "campaign for rural progress"—a campaign in every community, county, and state—even of national scope—which shall have for its purpose the solution of the rural problem, the ushering-in of a new rural civilization. This campaign will recognize industrial, social, and moral needs, and will endeavor to unite all forces and all people for the common end of a better agriculture and country life.

A necessary corollary of this "campaign for rural progress" is the development of personal leadership in rural communities. Individual men and women must do what needs doing—institutions are but vehicles for carrying human endeavor, boilers for generating human powers.

I will close by quoting from the report of the Commission on Country Life a paragraph entitled "The Call for Leadership":

We must picture to ourselves a new rural social structure, developed from the strong resident forces of the open country; and then we must set at work all the agencies that will tend to bring this about. The entire people need to be roused to this avenue of usefulness. Most of the new leaders must be farmers who can find not only a satisfying business career on the farm, but who will throw themselves into the service of upbuilding the community. A new race of teachers is also to appear in the country. A new rural clergy is to be trained. These leaders will see the great underlying problem of country life, and together they will work, each in his own field, for the one goal of a new and permanent rural civilization. On the development of this distinctively rural civilization rests ultimately our ability, by methods of farming requiring the highest intelligence, to continue to feed and clothe the hungry nations; to supply the city and metropolis with fresh blood, clean bodies, and clear brains that can endure the strain of modern urban life; and to preserve a race of men in the open country that, in the future as in the past, will be the stay and strength of the nation in time of war, and its guiding and controlling spirit in time of peace.

III

THE TASK OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH[1]

It is hopeless to expect that the church can fulfil its mission among the people who live upon the land unless it conceives its function in terms of the fundamental needs of those people. Furthermore, it must interpret those underlying needs in the light of the actual conditions which exist in the industrial and social life of the times. For these reasons, attention has thus far been directed to the larger aspects of the permanent rural problem, and to the great forces which must be invoked if we are to secure a progressive solution of the problem.

[1] The author has in mind as the "country church," in this whole discussion, the church which ministers chiefly to the people who till the soil. He is quite aware that in some parts of the United States the word "rural" is habitually used to define communities outside the cities. The line of cleavage between a genuine country church and other non-urban churches is indefinite, and in the author's judgment need not be made sharp and clear. Doubtless the village church, like the village itself, constitutes a social problem; yet the same general principles are applicable to church work both in small non-urban communities and in the more strictly "country" regions. It seems best, however, to state clearly what type of church and community the author has more or less consciously in the background of his imagination.

We have before us then this important goal of American civilization—the maintenance upon our land of a class of people who fairly represent our national standards of government, of industrial efficiency, of social privilege, of intelligence, and of virtue. And we have discussed the large principles, or groups of forces, that seem essential in the working-out of the effort to keep our rural people to the levels of the best American ideals. We have not here time to elaborate the methods by which these forces can be incorporated into appropriate institutions. Indeed, it is quite obvious that each of these great needs of rural life has already developed its special institutions. The state, the school, the voluntary organization, the church are all serviceable in promoting rural wealth and welfare. And it needs little argument to convince us that such institutions are necessary. Private initiative and business enterprise must of course be relied upon to forward good purposes. But society seeks to stimulate and even to direct individual efforts toward large ends that are for the good of society as well as the individual. Men must work together in some organized fashion, if social progress is to come to its full flower. The

church is one of these forms of organized effort. It has a special work to do. What is that work?

Before answering that direct question, we must indulge in some general observations concerning the place of the church as one of the social institutions needed in solving the problem.

The church must be frankly regarded, by its best friends even, as one among several institutions vital to rural life. It is not the only institution essential to rural salvation. This simple statement may be a rock of offense to many, a platitude to others. It is a main feature of our general thesis, however. The more readily we recognize its force, and the more quickly we act upon its implications, the better for rural progress and for the country church.

Nevertheless, the church has a peculiarly close relationship to the other rural institutions, and in fact to all the movements of rural life. The church has not adequately appreciated this fact, which has its origin in a characteristic feature of country life, namely, that all its interests are very intimately bound together. The work of the farm and of the household, the life of the family, the amusements of

the neighborhood, the interests of all in school, Grange, and church are closely intertwined. As a necessary consequence, the institutions of the country have unusual dependence upon what might be called the total interests of the community. Nowhere else is the school so completely at the mercy of the local public opinion, for good or for ill, as in the country. So with the church. It draws its sustenance chiefly from a small community of people of little wealth. It possesses one of the very few and unusually scattered public or institutional buildings of the community. The church is deeply dependent upon the industry of the community. You cannot build up a prosperous church in a place where agriculture is declining. The city church draws its members from a wide area, from many vocations; the country church, from a narrow area and from practically one vocation. In social life, even if there be several churches in the neighborhood, a given church is quite dependent upon the general social resources of the community.

This brings us to a third important observation—that there is especial need in the country of defining broadly, but with a fair degree of clearness, the essential functions of the different

groups of institutions. There must be some guiding principle of activity that is workable in practice, while in harmony with a sound social analysis. I do not know of a single important rural institution, save one, that has thus far, in a large way at least, enunciated clearly its main function and at the same time provided the machinery for executing the manifold details of its policy. That exception is the Grange, which in its declaration of purposes has clearly stated its task in inclusive terms, and in its machinery of organization has provided means for the ends. We might expect that the school would have distinct ends in view. But the rural school is at present in a chaos of transition schemes designed to bridge the way from the old individual notion of instructing Johnnie and Mary how to become adept in the use of the child's chest of intellectual tools, to that desirable but as yet uncertain ground where the "school must reflect the life and industry of the community," and "become a social force in the community life." I do not happen to know of a rural church with a program of work for its neighborhood that represents a really live attack upon the essential problems of rural civilization—though doubtless such churches

exist. The Grange comes far short of its program. The rural school with all its uncertainty has been and is a great force. The church is a saving salt in every rural community, in spite of its quiescence. But all these institutions will take on new vigor, once it is seen just *what* their really big tasks are, and *how big* they are, and when they plan to work shoulder to shoulder for the large general community aim.

THE FUNCTION OF RURAL INSTITUTIONS

In order that we may now come at once to the real subject of this series of lectures, I shall attempt in rather dogmatic fashion to state the functions of those main social institutions upon which we must chiefly rely for the solution of the rural problem.

1. *Government* should protect the legitimate interests of the agricultural classes, in so far as legislation is effective for this end, by making and enforcing appropriate laws; it should foster the agricultural industry by collecting facts and distributing information concerning the commercial or business aspects of farming; and it should encourage, and if necessary direct, rural co-operative enterprises which cannot readily be initiated or managed by voluntary organizations.

2. *The agencies of rural education* as a whole, forming a highly specialized branch of state activity, while serving as organs of general education of rural youth, should also make it a part of their task to seek out new knowledge and to use all knowledge as a means of increasing the industrial efficiency of rural people, young and old, and of stimulating their intellectual interests; the rural and agricultural schools in particular should serve as centers for rural culture; and should develop both the materials for, and the spirit of, personal service in behalf of neighborhood, state, and nation.

3. *Farmers' organizations* are to unite the individuals living upon the land into appropriate groups for various common purposes—industrial, social, political—but in the main to secure and conserve class power, both in the interest of the class and of society as a whole.

4. *The country church* (and its allies) is to maintain and enlarge both individual and community ideals, under the inspiration and guidance of the religious motive, and to help rural people to incarnate these ideals in personal and family life, in industrial effort and political development, and in all social relationships.

I do not offer these statements of the func-

tions of the great rural social institutions as final scientific definitions. It is hoped that they may have essential validity in the present discussion by indicating in a broad way the part that each agency may take in rural evolution. We may not enlarge upon any of them, save the last, except to note that there is more or less overlapping of function, that nevertheless the work of each institution is fairly clear, and that all must work together if consistent progress is to be made. There is obvious overlapping of function, because human inspirations and motives are rooted in diverse strata of condition and circumstance, and work themselves out in all human effort. Institutions cannot be definitive. The most they can do is to emphasize certain special aspects of life or thought. For example, the one word "educational," in a very broad sense, ought to be used to indicate the methods of all these institutions. All the results too are education for the individual and the race. So with ideals. They permeate all institutional endeavor, they are fostered by all co-operative enterprise. Yet the main task, the special work of each institution, comes out with some clearness, let us hope, in the statements made concerning the field

each is to cultivate. The same reasons hold for an argument that all must work together. None can succeed fully unless all are active and efficient. Just because the human mind and heart do not divide into compartments, we need the total efforts of specialized social functions. It is true of social groups as of individuals that "now are they many members and yet one body."

Our next task is to analyze the definition of the special work of the country church, which may here be repeated:

The country church (and its allies) is to maintain and enlarge both individual and community ideals, under the inspiration and guidance of the religious motive, and to help rural people to incarnate these ideals in personal and family life, in industrial effort and political development, and in all social relationships.

THE NEED OF IDEALS IN RURAL LIFE

This definition first of all emphasizes the need of ideals in rural life. Let us note some of the elements of this need.

One grave danger to permanent rural progress is the low *level* of ideals, determined by community standards. It is not that the

average ideals are lower than in the city. I think they are higher. But they come perilously close to a dead level in immense areas of country. There is an absence of that high idealism that acts as yeast upon the whole mass, which often prevails in cities. It is harder to rise above the conventions in the country, simply because there are few strata of popular habit. In the city there are many: the individual can pass from one to another. Things are reduced to simpler terms in the country. This has its advantages, but it tends to blight budding ideals or to drive them out for development elsewhere—usually in the city.

As a consequence the rural community is in constant danger of stagnation—of settling down into the easy chairs of satisfaction. Rural life needs constant stimulus of imported ideas—a stimulus of suggestion apart from its daily routine.

Moreover, rural ideals sometimes lack breadth and variety. Life in the country easily becomes monotonous, humdrum. It needs broadening, as well as elevating. It needs variety, gaiety. But these changes can find their proper stimulus only in motives that are high

and worthy. Hence an appeal must be made for the cultivation of ideals of personal development and neighborhood advancement.

When ideals do come into country life, they are apt to be not indigenous, but urban notions transplanted bodily. Urban ideals may often be grafted onto some strong rural stock. Transplantation is dangerous. Someone must be at work in the country neighborhoods breeding a new species of aspirations out of the common hardy varieties that have proved their worth.

Lack of ideals is in a sense responsible for the drift away from the farm. Some people leave the country because they cannot realize their ideals in the existing rural atmosphere. Others go because they have no thought of the possibilities of country life.

In a former chapter attention was called to the fact that rural life is more full of poetry than any other. But rural romance is often stifled in the atmosphere of drudgery and isolation. This high sentiment is of the soul and can come only as the soul expands. It is not merely an enjoyment of trees, crops, and animals. It is in part a sense of exaltation born of contact with God at work. It has in it an

element of triumph because great powers are being harnessed for man's bidding. It has in it somewhat of the air of freedom, because of dealing with forces free and wild except as they are held in leash by an unseen Master driver. It has in it much of worship, because of all the deep mysteries of seed and soil, and because of the everlasting, patient procession of the seasons and their vicissitudes. I can conceive of preaching that would give to farm men and women a new birth of aspiration and hope simply because it should set vibrating the chords of poetry and romance that are strung upon the harps of men at work in God's out-of-doors—strings too often untouched by any hand save that of chance.

There is a sparse literature expressing this rural poetry. But I must read you some verses that with a few simple strokes illuminate this whole matter. It is not a poem *about* the things that inspire the farmer or that *ought* to inspire him; it is a revelation of his heart as he works. The poem is by Liberty H. Bailey:

> I hoe and I plow
> I plow and I hoe
> And the wind drives over the main.

I mow and I plant
I plant and I mow
While the sun burns hot on the plain.

I sow and I reap
I reap and I sow
And I gather the wind with the grain.

I go and I come
I come and I go
In the calm and the storm and the rain.

I think if I were to be the examiner of candidates for the country ministry, I would make one important question, What do you get out of that poem? There are some men foreordained to the city parish!

There is present in the country also the same abiding human need for sympathy, for stimulus and inspiration, as exists in the city. The personal fight for character, the battle of the soul against sensuality and materialism, goes on. The struggle of men to secure the reign of justice and kindness is perpetual. Perpetually then we must hold before the eyes of men and women the vision of better ways, better conditions, better means of progress, closer brotherhood—the vision of the kingdom of God within the soul and as a social structure. Let us then first

of all seek to "maintain and enlarge both individual and community ideals" among the people who live and work upon the soil.

"UNDER THE INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE OF THE RELIGIOUS MOTIVE"

Libraries have been written in support of the thesis that human character finds its heights only under the inspiration and guidance of the religious motive. There is no need of extended argument here. I wish to say squarely, however, that we cannot in my judgment hope adequately to idealize country life nor to secure the largest development either of personal character or of neighborhood welfare, except by appealing to the great Christian principles of the Fatherhood of God, the Masterhood of Jesus, and the Brotherhood of Man.

This statement is sufficient to justify the church in standing specifically for the maintenance and enlargement of rural ideals, because the Christian church has been for centuries the institution through which these great principles have found voice. The church has a right therefore to assume leadership in the permanent work of developing and applying the religious motive to the hopes and aspira-

tions of men. This leadership just now is peculiarly imperative because of the marked tendency everywhere to reduce our higher life to an unreligious basis.

THE CHURCH IS TO ACHIEVE RESULTS IN HUMAN CHARACTER AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The purpose of church work is practical. It is aimed to result in a better quality of manhood and womanhood. Now, the daily life of men and women is concerned with personal temptations, family relationships, the labors of the vocation, the duties of citizenship, the manifold social contacts of life. Hence ideals to be useful must work out successfully in this daily life. Conversely, the tone of daily life affects character. The reciprocal influence of ideals and of these environing conditions hammers out human character. The task of the church as the social organ of religious idealism is therefore to attempt to "incarnate its ideals in personal and family life, in industrial effort and political development, and in all social relationships." To achieve this, the church must incessantly hold up these ideals. It must also clearly teach that these ideals are not only to be fostered by activities within the church, but

must be made to permeate the hopes and motives and deeds and words of men and women in every relationship and in every social institution. Thus life becomes a unity. Thus religion is wedded to experience. Thus toil and industry, voting and political debating, friendliness and kindliness, become Christianized—Christlike. And only so may these things be.

SOME COROLLARIES OF THE DEFINITION

So much for a brief analysis of our definition of the function of the country church. It is necessary to add some comments of a more general character.

It will be noted first of all that this definition is not intended to aid in secularizing the church. Far from it. It is designed to spiritualize it, to safeguard it from ineffective attempts to rival some other agency better fitted for certain tasks, to rescue it from trivial activities that too often absorb its energies. It is inclusive of righteousness, because no worthy ideals for personal or neighborhood development would ever be unmoral. It implies the coming of the kingdom of God, both within the hearts of men and women and as a social reality. Those

who emphasize the need for personal salvation, those who enjoy the great value of the church as a medium of worship need not fear the results of church work under this motive. It does not exclude the idea of unworldliness—idealism is always unworldliness. As Professor Cooley says:

> All real religion has its unworldly side. . . . . There is no prospect that the world will ever satisfy us, and the structure of life is forever incomplete without something to satisfy the need of the spirit for ideas and sentiments that transcend and reconcile all particular aims whatsoever.[1]

By no means would we exclude the opportunity for the weary soul to fold its wings beneath the altar and hear words of peace and solace.

Moreover this statement of the work of the country church implies some considerations vital to country life reconstruction that are not always set down in church programs, but which the church can foster more fully than can any other agency. For I read into this function of the church such things as these:

1. Teaching people that personal growth and enlargement, along right lines, is a religious

[1] Cooley, *Social Organization*, 380.

duty. The church is apt to preach the thought that we are all miserable sinners, which of course most of us are; but to leave under-emphasized the dignity of the human soul, with its great tasks to perform.

2. The glorification of toil. The work of the farm is hard, too hard for most. It needs better direction—less of slavishness in it. It needs idealizing. To idealize it, we must unlock that vast mine of poetry stored up in the land. This poetry was cultivated in the days of hand work and group work, but has largely passed with the advent of machinery and solitary labor. We need a renaissance of farm poetry, wrought out of the farm itself and worked into the imaginations of land-toilers, as a permanent and joy-giving possession. This farm poetry cannot be anything else than essentially religious, for it is born of the sense of working with God himself for the service of fellow-men, and for the upbuilding of personal character.

3. A love for the rural environment will follow this idealization of toil. A permanently successful rural life cannot exist except through the love of the farm people for the land and what goes with it. Industrial success is of

course the first term in the formula for keeping the people on the land; but the second term is equally important, love for the life and work of the farm. The church can do much to cultivate this love for rural life, not by telling people that they ought to love it, but by leading them to the fountains of appreciation. The ministry to character through this attitude of mind is far reaching and abiding.

4. The passion for justice. The labor movement today is at bottom an attempt to realize justice between men. Its efforts are often crude and unjust, but its spirit is ethical and even religious. Now, our farmers have at times felt the same pressure of injustice—and many of them do today. This is a normal sentiment. It should deliberately be given a religious content by the church and directed into moral expressions. The farmers do not get their due today as a class—for instance, in legislation. It is good religion to tune their minds to a realization of true justice—justice to them from the state and other classes—and from them to other classes and to society as a whole.

In our thought today the social problems irresistibly take the lead. If the church has no live and bold

thought on this dominant question of modern life, its teaching authority on all other questions will dwindle and be despised.[1]

5. A community goal. We need a clearer view of some objective point toward which individual and community interests and endeavors may be directed. Let it be a definite goal, clean-cut and impressive in its appeal. The business of the country church is to interpret the kingdom of God to rural people in terms of their daily lives and daily toil.

SOME FURTHER ADVANTAGES OF THIS STATEMENT OF THE FUNCTION OF THE RURAL CHURCH

1. It recognizes the solidarity of the rural problem and the need of many agencies of progress. This is fundamental to all clear thinking about rural life. It is peculiarly important as a basis for large work on the part of any great rural institution.

2. It differentiates between the prime functions of the various great social institutions. It assigns large tasks that are distinct parts of an interlaced whole. It gives work that is worth doing. It is practical and seeks results.

[1] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 339.

3. It relates the church to the whole movement for rural progress. Thus the church may have an opportunity to make itself felt at all points. It gives religion the place it should have, not as a separate, special interest, but as a motive and spirit permeating all the activities of life.

4. It specializes the function of the church in terms of the spirit, not merely in terms of specific little tasks or of method. These specific little tasks must be performed, and appropriate methods must be worked out. But the abiding thing is the idea of what is to be achieved. Church work is first of all the work of the spirit.

5. It makes the church a servant of the whole community for the highest ends of life. Too often church members regard the church very much as a sort of private club, intended for the advantage of themselves only, and select a new member on their own terms. There is no objection to standards of admission to church membership. Indeed they are necessary. But the function of the church is one of service to the whole community, not merely to the little group who form the church. Any other conception of the church is deadening.

One reason for so many inefficient churches today is the prevalence of the self-centered spirit. Many people outside the church cannot see wherein the church helps them.

6. It compels the church to outline a definite program of work at once broad and specific, workable and inspiring, suited both to time and to eternity. Indefiniteness of function accounts in large measure for the lack of power shown by many churches.

7. It is elastic enough to fit any church and any community, for, though the work of the church be one work, it adapts itself to the special needs of each individual and each community. Thus the church becomes "all things to all men," but with the one hope that thereby it "might by all means save some."

THE MINISTER OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH

The nature of the work of the country preacher must follow the work of the church. His task is to make the church "function." If its work is broadened by our ideas of what it should do, he must enlarge his energies to meet the demand. If it means narrowing church activities, he must choose a more highly specialized field for his energies. For many

reasons I like the reiteration by some of our clergymen of that old statement of their work as the gist of the whole matter—"To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ." It has at least the merit of simplicity. And the Pauline motto, "This one thing I do," should be on the wall of every preacher's study. But these ecclesiastical statements of the preacher's work, just as is the case with the sociological statement which we have been discussing, must be interpreted in a program that meets the real situation. Here on our land are men and women at work, under varying conditions of intelligence, capacity, interest; with mixed motives, ambitions, hopes; with needs multitudinous—physical, mental, moral, spiritual. Here are young spirits just fluttering uncertainly into the new environment; old men and women bent with cares and disappointments; young and middle-aged full of vigor and energy. Here are some in bondage to sins of the body; others in travail of sorrow and suffering; others who are blinded by passions of jealousy, anger, uncharitableness. They face all sorts of problems in their work. They have to work under a set of conditions peculiar to the business of farming and to life in a rural environment. So the

country pastor needs to know not only the cure of souls, but he needs to appreciate the environment. More than all that, the rural minister, in order to carry out the real work of the church, should understand the larger implications of the work and life of the farm. It is at this point that help is especially needed by the people of the country. They are beset by the small daily individual problems; it is not surprising that they do not always see the great currents that are bearing them on.

Thus it comes about that the country preacher is to be a leader of the community. Possessing intelligent sympathy with his people and their struggles, he yet sees what many of them cannot see unaided—the ultimate problem and goal. He is no blind leader of the blind, but a veritable prophet of a higher and better life—both for the individual and for the community. He interprets to the people their highest problems.

There is danger of course that this leadership may be frittered away in trivial matters. Here is the most difficult task of the rural minister. He must be practical, he must not be above helpfulness in the small immediate needs, and

yet he must keep in sight of the vision, the pillars of cloud and fire.

His leadership is after all in setting up these ideals of personal and community life. They must permeate his preaching and guide his daily ministrations. He must idealize farm work and country life. He must exploit the possibilities of the personal life lived in a rural environment. He must show how the community is to become and must become a province in the kingdom of our God.

Nor will any active leadership in forwarding school, Grange, library, good roads, or what not, cause him to minimize his preaching. The pulpit is after all his fulcrum. Here he will gather up his experiences, concentrate his powers, on a message that shall be at once practical and inspiring.

That there are some special qualifications needed by the minister, it is hardly necessary to argue. He must have, first of all, the proper point of view—an appreciation of the rural problem, its nature, importance, and the principles underlying its solution. It is not enough that he merely reads about such matters, but he must "think on these things" until they are worked into the very core of his meditations.

So with his duties within the church. Necessarily his time and energy will be more than absorbed with the details of a pressing work, with numberless engagements and small interests. But in all this detail of small things, he must not forget the main task of the church of which he is the leader. The real import of his task, the ultimate meaning of his efforts must abide in his mind forever. These large views will enable him to steer his course between the rocks of petty circumstance on the one hand, and the sands of dreamy impracticability on the other. Moreover, his love for rural life and the rural people must be genuine and enthusiastic. If he loves the sunset over the hills, he ought to see it and get others to see it. If the click of the mower in the meadow is music to his ears, he should listen to the music. Is it a poor thing to ask of the country clergy that they shall become the minnesingers of a richer, more romantic, more poetical rural life? I think it a task very much after God's own heart.

So the rural clergyman will love the ways of rural folk. He will enter into their experiences, breathe the same air of simplicity and freedom, respond to the native

elements of rural character, understand the rural mind.

I am aware that these demands upon the country preacher require special talents. They call for a forceful, virile personality, a man among men.

I think that they also require special training. The clergyman should not be left to pick this up as he goes along. It should be a part of his preparation. He should know his field.

Hence it is clear that a somewhat thorough study of the subjects that would throw light upon the rural problem should be made an essential part of the professional training for the rural ministry. The man going to the rural field ought to possess a fair knowledge of the main problems along the following lines:

A broad idea of some one or more of the technical fields of farming, such as dairying, fruit-growing, etc.

The outlines of farm management and business control.

The large economic relationships of agriculture.

The social aspects of rural life, and the social institutions in their peculiar character, such as schools and means of agricultural educa-

tion, government, recreative life, organizations, etc.

Finally the country pastor should be a fixture —not necessarily in one parish. But there should be a distinct profession—the country ministry. It should command the services of the best men. It should have an *esprit du corps*. It should have a definite program. It should have a literature and the machinery for frequent conference and for aggressive propaganda. Let there be then an organized movement on behalf of the renaissance of the country church.

I hold that the problem of the country church is the most important aspect of the rural problem. It touches the highest point in the redirection of rural life. It sounds the deepest note in the harmonizing of the factors of a permanent rural civilization. It speaks the most eloquent word in the struggle to maintain the status of the farming class. Can the church rise to its opportunities?

IV

DIFFICULTIES AND SUGGESTIONS

Thus far we have been deliberately discussing the more theoretical aspects of the relationships between the church and the rural problem. This seemed to be the wisest method of approach, because we must establish our point of view before we can do the most effective concrete work. We must find a bottom philosophy for the development of human life under rural conditions, and an equally fundamental theory respecting the work of the church as a social institution in those communities. Therefore we have endeavored to outline the main features of the rural problem; to state the various principles of socialization, education, organization, religious idealism, and federation of forces, necessary to the solution of the rural problem; and to indicate the function of the church in the light of this analysis of the problem, and in harmony with the approved means of amelioration.

We come now to a brief discussion of some of the practical questions involved in the work of

the church in the rural community. It is doubtful wisdom for a layman to essay this task. It is possible, however, that the point of view of the layman interested in the larger social aspects of rural life, when applied to the concrete work of the church, may be of some value in assisting clergymen and other church leaders to orient themselves more perfectly than they could if they approached their problem only through the conventional vestibule of ecclesiastical thought and method.

First let us discuss some difficulties that face the church as it attempts to work out its task in the rural community. We may divide these into two classes—the difficulties with respect to the church as an institution, and those special difficulties that meet the clergyman in the country parish.

I. In the first place, there are too many churches. This bald statement will be justly challenged unless qualified by counter considerations such as these: in many regions there are not too many churches; a certain amount of competition among churches is conducive to health, and acts as a spur to ambition, just as with other institutions or with individuals; considering the part which sectarianism has played in

our Protestant church life, it is too much to expect that these differences may be obliterated at once and that all church people will unite under one roof and banner; it may also be questioned whether the old New England idea of one church for the town is either practicable or desirable. But the general proposition is valid. Rural regions as a rule are overchurched. There are exaggerated cases of this condition observable everywhere, as, for instance, when four or five small struggling churches exist within a constituency hardly large enough or wealthy enough to maintain more than one strong church. That there are serious evils flowing from this overchurching no one can deny. The old spirit of sectarianism is kept alive, and adventitious causes for this separateness and exclusiveness are magnified beyond all reason, until sometimes the real spirit and purpose of the church are well-nigh obliterated. Competition becomes rivalry that is sometimes highly un-Christian. The church comes to emphasize institutional pride and success, rather than service to the community. Indeed, if one church under such conditions sets itself up to become a servant of the community, it immediately encounters the jealousy

of other churches, who ask, "Who commanded thee to be a ruler over us?"

This overchurching results also in meager financial support. The problem of adequately financing the country church under a system of voluntary contributions is an extremely difficult problem at best. When you add to this natural difficulty the necessity of keeping up three or four establishments where one would answer, and then add to this again the modest financial ability of the average farm community, you have a condition of things that is well-nigh hopeless.

It goes without saying that sectarianism at its worst, or perhaps we might even say at its best, divides the energies of the church and mystifies the non-churchmen who might be reached by the simple message of religion, but who cannot quite understand the "isms" of the sects. This condition, bad enough in the city, is infinitely worse in the country. Sectarianism is far more divisive in the country than in the city, for a very simple reason. In any city of, say, 15,000 people or more, there is room for practically every sect, because a church can draw from a relatively large population, even though its membership may be scattered all

over the city. But in a small country community of 500 to 1,500 souls, the division of the church into different groups is a far more serious matter.

II. Another difficulty in the country church is the great danger of an undue development of the "boss system" in church management. I suppose this is a danger of the church everywhere—that some strong personality may dominate because of wealth, or force of character, or social position, or what not; but there is this offsetting situation—that almost any urban church, even in a small city, is likely to have a fairly full quota of strong men, and it is much more difficult for one or two men to "run" the church. But I think it is not an uncommon phenomenon that some vigorous individual, one among a few, is likely to dominate the small country church. It would be unfair to say that this is a characteristic situation, but it exists far too often. And when we recall the innate conservatism of the country man, we have a combination of circumstances that frequently makes it almost impossible for an ambitious minister to do anything worthy.

III. It is a common remark that during the

past generation the church has suffered in leadership because other institutions have competed with it for social service. I doubt whether this condition is any more apparent in the country than in the city, but where it does exist in the country, it is more disastrous. During the past two decades, especially in the prosperous communities of the Middle West, there has been a great wave of "fraternal" organization. In some rural communities there is a meeting of some association practically every night in the week. These organizations not only compete with the church socially, but they absorb time and energy and money that might otherwise, in part at least, be devoted to the church; and worst of all, they sometimes produce the impression that, so far as human welfare is concerned, they are almost as serviceable as the church.

IV. Another difficulty with the country church, already alluded to, is the existence of low ideals of its functions—more particularly with reference to its relation to the community. It is a peril confronting every social institution that it may become obsessed with its own importance, come to live for itself, place its emphasis upon its own growth, ask for loyalty

to itself for its own sake. Now, it is good social philosophy that any permanent social institution must have not only an excuse for existence, but that it must continue to justify itself, by constant effective service. It is undoubtedly true that practically every social agency has been called into being by some real need and, if it thrived, was found to answer to that need. But it is also true that, as soon as a social institution like the church is thoroughly established and has a traditional hold upon the imaginations and habits of people, it is tempted to lose its spirit of service, and to live largely unto itself. It is not too much to say that the rural church today is suffering from institutionalism. I fear that the ideal of service to mankind, irrespective of their beliefs or morals, but wholly with respect to their need, has become a lost art among country churches; and I do not look for the church to attain its rightful place until it shows its capacity to become the servant of the need of humankind. It would of course be unfair to say that the average church has sunk so low that this purpose of service is entirely absent. I think it *is* fair to say that the ideal for church work and service is on a low plane in the average com-

munity, and largely because the church is so generally regarded as an ark of safety for those who are wise enough, or righteous enough, to be admitted; instead of being, as it ought to be, an institution that organizes the spirit of human brotherhood under the leadership of the Master of life, for the redemption of the bodies and minds and hearts of men from the bondage of appetite and passion, and that ministers to the abiding need of all human souls for worship of the divine and for the renewal of faith in the things that are eternal. Doubtless the churchmen will say at once that this is precisely the whole purpose of the church. Unquestionably it is. But go into any average farm community and watch the actual workings of church life from year to year. Will you find the ideal working out? Will you even find the ideal held by the rank and file of the membership? Let us frankly face the situation; let us realize the need of a higher and broader ideal for the actual work of the church as a local institution.

V. Another difficulty that confronts the country church is the ease with which religion is separated from life. There is no need of dwelling on this point. It is a universal difficulty, and one that men and women have

to face every day in their personal lives. The church has to face it. And yet it may be that the church is somewhat to blame for the existence of the difficulty, because sometimes the preaching of the church seems to mark off that phase of life which is religious from that phase which is secular; whereas life is really a unity, and the great question is not properly to pigeonhole our qualities, but to motive all our activities on the highest lines.

VI. As over against this narrow idea of religion there is another difficulty, growing out of the effort to remedy this narrowness: that the church may attempt things not promotive of religious life, or at least may expend its chief energies upon unimportant matters. A church supper is a perfectly valid institution. Money must be raised, and the church supper helps to raise it. It brings the church members together in good-fellowship, and it has many other advantages. But how pitiful when activities like these become the sum total of "church work."

THE COUNTRY CLERGYMAN'S DIFFICULTIES

Let us now discuss some of the special difficulties that confront the minister of the country church.

I. The first difficulty that shall be named is that which strikes at the very root of the country church problem—the small salaries that are paid to country clergymen as a whole. There is no body of men deserving of greater praise than the ministers of the church, who in all times and in all places have sacrificed high ambitions, sometimes great positions and the hope of gain, for the sake of their work. The Jesuit father, the home and foreign missionary, the pastor of the small flock in the little country community have been men of courage, self-sacrifice, and devotion beyond all praise. They are sensitive of any comment that might imply that they desire to bring about a situation where financial reward may seem to play a chief part in their lives. It is a serious criticism of the church that it has permitted the present condition of affairs to continue. The average salary paid to our country ministers is shamefully low, disgracefully inadequate. It is often not sufficient to maintain a respectable standard of physical living, to say nothing about books, travel, college education for boys and girls. In an era when the average family expenditure is constantly increasing, the salaries of country clergymen have remained stationary.

Of course the prevalence of small churches is largely responsible for the difficulty. Perhaps the rural mind also has something to do with it. Country people sometimes feel that the clergyman is earning all that he is worth. This may not be fair to the clergyman, but it certainly is the view not infrequently held. Then, too, the average countryman has an exaggerated notion of the power of salary. The farmer gets so large a proportion of his living incidentally and by the way, through his dairy, his garden, his orchard, that he has not the slightest conception of the drafts made upon the treasury of the salaried man by rent, fuel, and the necessity of purchasing all supplies. When this trait of the countryman is reinforced by a natural aversion to spend money to support a pastor who might, perchance, if his salary were larger, have a little better "table," buy a little better furniture, wear a little better clothes, than the other people in the community, you have a situation that it is rather hard to overcome. But the bottom fact is that the salaries of country clergymen are ridiculously low. The church has no right to ask its leaders to serve under such conditions.

II. Another difficulty is the small field, with

widely scattered parishioners. Of course it is possible for a clergyman thoroughly to cultivate a small field. Intensive parish work is perhaps as desirable as intensive farming. But in the average rural community the opportunities for building things up, for progress, for carrying out ambitious plans, for making things "go," for bringing things to pass, are often meager, discouragingly meager. Turn an ambitious man loose into the average country community, and what can he do? Sometimes he can do a great deal, if he have tact and patience. But the limitations growing out of the size of the parish, the number of people to be reached, the financial resources with which to man the guns, are abiding and serious.

III. The isolation of the country is a serious difficulty to the average country clergyman. His family is somewhat isolated; he himself is isolated from pastors of his own denomination. He has not easy access as a rule to libraries and to books. He may go occasionally to church conventions, but he has to live his life very much alone, from a professional point of view. When this isolation is added to other discouragements of the situation, it is not much

wonder that he eagerly accepts a call to the city.

IV. It would be a slander on country clergymen to say that as a class they are indolent, although students of the subject have sometimes said that they are more apt to be indolent than they ought to be. Doubtless it is easy for the country clergyman to become indolent. Most men need constant stimulus to do their best work. The quiet of the country, the lack of social friction, the isolation from other pastors, the small size of the parish, the difficulty of doing new things and large things tempt a man to settle back into the seat, to let the reins slacken, to put the whip in the socket, and to allow the horse to jog at its own pace. That the majority of country ministers do not take this attitude is a tribute to their high purposes.

V. The question of preparation for work in the country parish offers a difficulty of considerable proportions. We now ask our country clergymen, at least in New England, and to a large degree all over the North, to take a college course, followed by a seminary course of three years, and at the age of twenty-five, perhaps, to "settle down" at a salary of $600 or

$800 a year. We require thorough scholarship, an acquaintance of wide range with philosophy, literature, science, theology, history. The dangers proceeding from an ignorant ministry need no elucidation. A suggestion that the scholarship standards for admission to the country parish should be lowered would doubtless be met with disapproval. I am not going to propose such a course. The question, however, is inevitable: Are you not asking what is next to impossible when you attempt to train a large body of men for a permanent country ministry, under existing conditions, with the expenditure of time and money now required, and with salaries continuing at the present standards?

But a far more important question is this: Are you really preparing men for the country ministry? Do the seminary graduates go to the country parish with the intention of making it a life work? When they do go, do they understand the problems of the community? Do they know the life and thought of the people? We have put a pretty serious burden upon the man who is to serve the country parish. How to induce the young clergyman to make country church work his life work, how

to prepare him for that work so that he shall go to it with clear insight, is to my mind a difficulty of extreme significance.

VI. The final difficulty that I see with respect to the country clergyman is that if he becomes a community leader, as he ought, he may scatter his energies. His task is to understand the work of the church in the light of the total rural problem. He must be a student of large affairs. He must know his community—the people, the industries, the social life as expressed in school, lodge, and family. He cannot neglect his professional study. All this means hard, untiring work. One may easily become superficial.

SUGGESTIONS

The title of this chapter is "Difficulties and Suggestions." We have dwelt somewhat strongly, perhaps too strongly, upon the difficulties. The suggestions that are to follow must be put very briefly. It is not supposed that they will meet all the difficulties that confront the average country church or its clergyman. It is a hope that they may offer some thoughts for a constructive policy that will apply to the work of the local church in the average rural community.

I. First of all, I must strongly urge the study of the country church problem by the seminaries, and by various church organizations. It is a misfortune that there does not exist a clearing-house like the Federal Commission on Country Life, or some privately founded institution, with money enough and genius enough to make a thorough study of the country church problem the nation over. In the absence of such a desideratum, the most that can be done—and much can be done—must be performed through existing denominational or educational agencies. The Presbyterian Board of Home Missions has already taken up a systematic study of rural church conditions, and, in fact, has followed the initiation of this investigation by holding a short series of meetings or conferences on the rural church problem, in which other churches are asked to participate. We first need to know the facts, to know what the real problems are. The mere study of the situation at once suggests remedies, gives stimulus to new work, fires the imagination with new possibilities, and starts a chain of human effort for improving the situation. Let us have then a comprehensive field study of the actual problem of the country church.

II. Inaugurate a definite movement for the special preparation of young men for a career in the country parish. This task belongs to the seminaries and colleges together. A single seminary can do something; a single college can do something; but we cannot hope to make a very large impression unless there shall be developed a general movement which shall seek to standardize, to a degree at least, the type of preparation for this particular work. So far the need of this preparation has never been fully recognized. It is not going to be easy to bring this about. Different sections of the country have different ideals of the ministry. But if nothing more should come of it than a clear recognition that the candidate for the rural parish, in addition to the conventional preparation of the minister, does need some special study which shall bring him to appreciate the real needs of the rural people, not alone in spiritual but in the industrial and social spheres as well, any effort put forth in this direction will have been well worth while.

At the risk of seeming to speak as a partisan of a particular type of educational institution, I venture to suggest that the agricultural colleges may also be invited by theological semi-

naries and church schools to co-operate in preparing men for church work in our rural communities. Doubtless seminaries and church schools could add courses in rural sociology and agricultural economics, and possibly even in technical agriculture, but it is a serious question whether many of them will want to go very far along these lines; besides, "atmosphere" has a good deal to do with sound education, and the atmosphere of a well-managed agricultural college ought, of itself, to be conducive to interest in the problems of rural life. Would it not help if candidates for the country ministry should be permitted and encouraged, and possibly in some cases even required, to take more or less work at a well-equipped agricultural college, as a part of their regular preparation for the rural parish? It is perfectly possible for agricultural colleges to offer such courses in elementary agriculture and farm management, in agricultural education and organization, in agricultural economics, rural sociology, and rural government, that a man in one semester, perhaps—although a year would be better—would gain a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the wide general problems that the farmers have to face. If that is

impossible, a summer-school course of a few weeks would do a great deal toward giving a young man possession of the general philosophy of the rural problem, and a command of the literary sources of further study.

III. Develop systematic, organized effort on behalf of a more useful country church. There has been organized in our midst a New England Country Church Association. One cannot predict the possibilities of its growth, but it embodies an idea of primary significance, namely, that the problem that faces the country church is sufficiently important and unique to demand special attention, and to give point to an organization which seeks to unite all who may be interested in the solution of the one special problem. Church conferences, frequent and regular institutes for country pastors, and many other devices can be instituted as a part of the machinery for this work. Let it be a part of this widely organized campaign on behalf of the country church to develop a *program* for the church situated in the rural community, a program that is at once definite, broad, scientific, practical, spiritual. Thus well-planned experiments may be tried under varying conditions. Make the work

of the country church a live, aggressive work.

IV. Encourage the federation of churches. The movement for the federation of churches will grow slowly, from the very nature of the case. All the logic of the situation and of common-sense is on the side of federation. But it has to face tradition, prejudice, sentiment, financial obligations. It is, however, a fundamental article in a country church program.

Subsidiary to this general idea of federation are the following suggestions: If actual church union is out of the question, or the abolition of extraneous churches, let there be co-operation for practical work in the community. If churches cannot unite organically, can they not unite for service? Why should not the church present a solid phalanx in any community on behalf of its intrinsic work? It can at the very least unite for a thorough study of the interests and of the conditions that go to make up the community problem. Why not have common meetings for the discussion of fundamental moral and spiritual issues of the community? Why not come to an agreement in regard to the way in which evils may be met, or inspira-

tion for the higher life be given? The pitiful thing about our sectarianism is not so much that the church is broken up into many separate units, but that this disunity of organization results in religious inefficiency. Possibly a further development of this co-operation may bring us eventually to a sort of division of labor in the community, so that specialized work is laid out, not for a particular church alone, but for the community. Earnest men have advocated the idea of so federating the work of the churches that special leaders for boys' work, for child-saving, the employment of deaconesses, and so on, may become a characteristic feature of the rural church machinery. How far this is practicable remains to be seen, but at any rate it is worth while to suggest that co-operation be tried far enough to see if expert service may not be rendered through the common efforts of all the churches of the community, even though each retain absolutely its own entity. Of course federation means ultimately the abolition of unnecessary churches. In the language of one of its leaders, there should be neither "overlapping" nor "overlooking," but each church should be responsible for some given territory, and the work must be

so divided that a systematic attempt shall be made to reach every individual. This may sometimes result in having one church in the community; it may not. It ought to result, however, in a condition where the church presents a united front in carrying out its real function. Indeed, church federation means not merely the amalgamation of churches, but, even more emphatically, the co-operation of separate churches for great community ends. As this same leader has so well said, "We must have consolidation somewhere, co-operation everywhere."[1]

V. Another important consideration that comes very close to this idea of federation is that the church shall make full use of its natural allies, such as the Young People's Society and the Sunday school. In this connection, I wish to speak a strong word on behalf of the rural work of the Young Men's Christian Association. The church at large is not reaching young men in the country districts. The Young Men's Christian Association has the machinery, the experience, the purpose, and the enthusiasm to accomplish this all-important

[1] Rev. E. T. Root, field secretary of the Rhode Island and Massachusetts Federations of Churches.

end. Every encouragement should be given by pastors and others for the development of this work in the rural community. Unfortunately, clergymen sometimes feel jealous of this work, and perhaps their attitude is occasionally justifiable in the light of unwise efforts that may be made. But in some way, this great power for good must be tied up with the interests of the church. The Y.M.C.A. should regard itself as a specialized organ of the church, and there should be the closest co-operation and harmony in their work. The same plea may be made on behalf of the rural work of the Young Women's Christian Association.

VI. The development of lay leadership in the rural community is a matter of very large consequence in country church work. It is not so much that the country church lacks men and women who will do the church work as they understand it, as that if the country church is to fulfil the function which we have assigned to it, if the country clergyman is to be the leader in the community that he ought to be, we must have a group of laymen who also know the large rural problem, who understand the elements of its solution, and who appre-

ciate the real place of the church. Here is another opportunity for the agricultural colleges and agricultural schools to help train men who will go back to the farm, and there not only make a success of the business of farming, but also throw themselves into community leadership. Heretofore, agricultural colleges have not fulfilled their obligations in this respect. They are beginning to see their duty now, and are offering courses which will encourage men while in college to make a study of the rural problem, and to become leaders in community service when they return to the farm.

To develop lay support for twentieth-century country church work means also that local pastors, general church societies, and leaders in the church everywhere must organize a definite plan for discussing with laymen the leading features of this reorganized church service. Clergymen must lead. But the laity finally decides the issues. Close co-operation, intelligent sympathy, clear appreciation there must be between the minister and the parishioner. The farmer himself should have the direct help of the church in his desire to understand the relation of the church to the rural problem.

VII. There must be a larger financial support. This brings us to one of the most difficult questions, one of the most complicated problems, that the country church has to face. Two principles may be applied at this point. The first principle is that of developing more completely local support. A series of questions recently sent out bearing on this matter brought answers which seemed to indicate that the average farm community is quite competent to support the average country church, if it would. But for many reasons, some of which have been discussed already, this community support is not forthcoming. The church is supported by the few, and sometimes not even adequately supported by its own members. As a matter of self-protection, the church might well encourage any large community service, because such service would eventually assist in bringing to the church a wider range of gifts. A reduction in the number of churches would, in many places, entirely solve this question of local support; in others, enlarged community interest is the only solution; in still others, a new standard of giving by church members must be developed.

The second principle is based upon the belief

that while a great many rural communities can support their own churches without external aid, a very large number can never hope to do this. It has been accepted as a principle among our leaders in education that for education purposes the wealth of the whole state must be placed at the disposal of all the youth of the state. A somewhat similar principle must be recognized in trying to solve the financial problem of the rural church: *the wealth of the whole church must in some way be placed at the disposal of the whole church.* The wealth concentrates in cities. They have tasks of their own that draw upon their resources; at the same time, as a matter of justice, and as a matter of self-protection and self-interest on the part of the cities, no community, however small and isolated, should be allowed to relapse either into ignorance or into paganism, and if the small isolated community cannot sustain itself, it must, temporarily at least, have outside aid.

There are perhaps four ways in which this outside aid may be given. The first is the most common one—that of aid from a central denominational home missionary society. The second is an endowment of individual churches. The third is an endowment, or some special

appropriation, made by a particular denomination, to aid the rural churches in that denomination. The fourth is a general endowment for the rural church as such, irrespective of denominational lines.

With respect to the first plan of financing the rural church, home missionary aid, I confess that it seems invidious to put into the same category a "mission" to the savages of Africa, to the almost equally uncivilized men in a frontier mining camp, and to the little white church set on a hill in the midst of a scattered and "poor but honest" country folk, kin of the best blood of Puritan or Cavalier.

Endowments for individual churches, given by men and women of means, may well be encouraged. Two possible dangers from this form of aid are to be noted, however: Endowed churches may fail to put forth adequate effort for self-support; endowment unwisely placed may permanently establish a church that is really superfluous and that ought to be eliminated.

An endowment or aid fund specifically for country churches, made by each denomination, would at least dignify the position of the country church receiving aid, express the obligations of the church as a whole to use its

wealth in behalf of the smaller and weaker churches, and at once give point to a country church movement or campaign.

A general endowment fund for the rural church, to be given irrespective of denominational lines, and under the guidance of a broad policy of determining community needs, is a magnificent conception, and if it could be realized would at once inaugurate a new era for the rural church. But it would take an enormous endowment for a really adequate support. It would require a knowledge of the field amounting almost to omniscience, and a capacity for reconciliation of sectarian differences, combined with administrative talent, approaching genius.

This matter of financial support is of course fundamental, and any attempt really to get at the question must mean a plan of organization which will have far-reaching consequences in all phases of country church work. Conversely, it is doubtful if any scheme designed to organize or correlate country church activities can meet the full need of the situation, unless it includes some remedy for the present financial difficulties in rural church enterprises. So important is the problem, so difficult its solution,

so few are the precedents, that one must hesitate to outline a plan of relief which from the nature of the case expresses faith rather than works. But to falter at this point would be to shrink from the assault on the citadel when all but that is won. Hence I venture to submit for your criticism the merest outline of a

PLAN FOR DEVELOPING SUPPORT FOR THE COUNTRY CHURCH AND FOR ORGANIZING A COMPREHENSIVE COUNTRY CHURCH PROPAGANDA

1. Let each denomination having numerous rural churches segregate into a department its various enterprises on behalf of such churches. This might be termed the Country Church Department, and it should be well organized into a firm administrative unit. The field of each department could be the state, or it might embrace appropriate groups of states. There should also be a national department, representing the total interest of the denomination in the rural church. The question of aid to small rural churches would be taken out of the category of missions, and in its place would loom the larger question of the relation of the whole church to the rural problem. Each

denomination would have to organize this department in consonance with its peculiar polity; but the main purpose of organizing the denominational wealth and power for service to the rural church and rural community could be realized. The Presbyterian church has already developed a nucleus for just this sort of thing, on a national scale.

It goes without saying that very definite plans would have to be laid for financial aid to small churches, for their counsel, guidance, and encouragement, for the training and supply of ministers qualified to serve the country parish, and for deep study of the religious phases of the problem of the rural community. These plans must be worked out through study and experience and in harmony with denominational practices and aspirations.

It would be unfortunate if this proposal should be construed as a reflection upon the splendid work being done by many home missionary organizations. But the idea implied in the phrase "home missions" seems to be no longer adequate to represent the problem which the church confronts in the country districts.

2. It is not enough, however, that organiza-

tion on behalf of the country church shall be along denominational lines; it must also be interdenominational. I have already said that the federation of churches is a fundamental article in a country church program. Federation of denominational interests on behalf of the country church must therefore supplement the activities of these country church departments. Wherever possible, superfluous churches should be eliminated, and all existing churches united for many practical co-operative ends. But church federation means very much more than eliminating needless church societies. The organized work of church federation is ambitious to serve as an organ of union for *any* purpose common to all the churches. The second important suggestion is, then, that the Federation of Churches be utilized in order to secure definite co-operation of the various denominational country church departments. This could perhaps best be done through a country church department of the Federation.

3. Where the Federation of Churches is not yet fully organized, and indeed perhaps as a movement by itself, there might well be organized a Country Church Association, to represent the interest of the whole church in

the rural problem. It should include theological schools, representatives of the rural work of the Young Men's Christian Association and of other allies of the church, as well as individual farmers, clergymen, teachers, and other rural social workers. Chiefly it should represent the various country church departments in union for a common service to the country church. There is at present a "New England Country Church Association."

In this way the present strength of denominational interest and financial support would be gained for a definite country church campaign, while the obvious disadvantages of exclusively denominational activity would be sunk in a real federation for the one object of enlarging the function and rehabilitating the power of the church in the rural community.

Thus overlapping could be eliminated, each church could be made responsible for a given territory, and no area would be left unchurched. Self-support would be encouraged and required, and exterior aid would be given more nearly by obligation, not so much by charity. Close study of the country church problem would be undertaken. Enthusiasm for the rural church in both country and city would be

aroused as never before. Private endowment for single churches could be encouraged and directed. Large endowments for country church work would be fostered. A clearing-house for all country church problems would be in active existence. Denominational interest would be gained, but sectarian rivalry reduced. A comprehensive campaign on behalf of a new country church could be inaugurated. The rural church could present a united front, develop a large program, assert its leadership among the forces needed to solve the rural problem.

VIII. The church as a church should take a far larger part in the activities of the community. The precise forms of activity to be developed in each community by state, school, farmers' organization, and church must be worked out in harmony with their primary functions, with as little overlapping as possible, and in a spirit of co-operative service. The present social drift seems to be very clearly toward specialization of function, an institutional division of labor. At the same time, it is highly desirable, in the rural community at least, that existing social institutions shall be utilized for all necessary purposes. It is not improbable that the

efficiency which comes from specialization of function may be secured, and at the same time the chaos which results from a multiplicity of organizations be reduced to low terms, if each rural institution shall develop such subdivisions of its work as are consistent with its function. Thus the church, through the Young Men's Christian Association, may reach the boys and young men; through men's clubs may concentrate the attention of all the men of the neighborhood upon topics of large local and public concern; through a woman's committee or group accomplish what the modern woman's club essays to do for its members, and may in various other ways bring about the organization, directly through the church itself, of a group of social activities now utterly neglected or imperfectly developed. This means of course a phase of institutional church work.

IX. I have but one more suggestion. The church must share in a large campaign for rural progress. Let the church relate itself to all good movements for rural betterment. Let it become an ally and leader of all the great agencies that promise to create a new rural civilization, to maintain the status of the rural

people. Let it not think anything unclean. Let it not hold itself aloof from Samaritan or Gentile. Let it reach the hearts of men through their daily lives and daily toil.

THE RURAL CHURCH

In some great day
The country church
Will find its voice
And it will say:

"I stand in the fields
Where the wide earth yields
Her bounties of fruit and of grain;
Where the furrows turn
Till the plowshares burn
As they come round and round again;
Where the workers pray
With their tools all day
In sunshine and shadow and rain.

"And I bid them tell
Of the crops they sell
And speak of the work they have done;
I speed every man
In his hope and plan
And follow his day with the sun;
And grasses and trees,
The birds and the bees
I know and I feel ev'ry one.

"And out of it all
As the seasons fall
I build my great temple alway;
I point to the skies
But my footstone lies
In commonplace work of the day;
For I preach the worth
Of the native earth—
To love and to work is to pray."

—LIBERTY H. BAILEY

V

THE CALL OF THE COUNTRY PARISH

The country-side is calling, calling for men. Vexing problems of labor and of life disturb our minds in country as in city. The workers of the land are striving to make a better use of their resources of soil and climate, and are seeking both larger wealth and a higher welfare. But the striving and the seeking raise new questions of great public concern. Social institutions have developed to meet these new issues. But the great need of the present is leadership. Only men can vitalize institutions. We need leaders among the farmers themselves, we need leaders in education, leaders in organization and co-operation. So the country church is calling for men of God to go forth to war against all the powers of evil that prey upon the hearts of the men who live upon the land, as well as upon the people in palace and tenement.

The country church wants men of vision, who see through the incidental, the small, the transient, to the fundamental, the large, the

abiding issues that the countryman must face and conquer.

She wants practical men, who seek the mountain top by the obscure and steep paths of daily toil and real living, men who can bring things to pass, secure tangible results.

She wants original men, who can enter a human field poorly tilled, much grown to brush, some of it of diminished fertility, and by new methods can again secure a harvest that will gladden the heart of the great Husbandman.

She wants aggressive men, who do not hesitate to break with tradition, who fear God more than prejudice, who regard institutions as but a means to an end, who grow frequent crops of new ideas and dare to winnow them with the flails of practical trial.

She wants trained men, who come to their work with knowledge and with power, who have thought long and deeply upon the problems of rural life, who have hammered out a plan for an active campaign for the rural church.

She wants men with enthusiasms, whose energy can withstand the frosts of sloth, of habit, of pettiness, of envy, of back-biting, and whose spirit is not quenched by the waters

of adversity, of unrealized hopes, of tottering schemes.

She wants persistent men, who will stand by their task amid the mysterious calls from undiscovered lands, the siren voices of ambition and ease, the withering storms of winters of discontent.

She wants constructive men, who can transmute visions into wood and stone, dreams into live institutions, hopes into fruitage.

She wants heroic men, men who possess a "tart, cathartic virtue," men who love adventure and difficulty, men who can work alone with God and suffer no sense of loneliness.

THE APPEALS FROM THE RURAL PARISH

This call from the country parish is one that may well give pause to men who seek to serve their country and mankind. There are numerous and powerful appeals coming up from the tillers of the soil, to those still undecided as to the life task. Let us name some of these appeals:

There is the abiding significance of the great problem of agriculture and country life. The hungry nations are to be fed, the world's nakedness is to be clothed, God-given fertility

is to be conserved. The forces of nature are to be harnessed by science and driven by trained skill. A fundamental human industry is to be fostered, an industry that supports gigantic railways, huge manufactures, immense commercial enterprises, stupendous financial operations. Scores of millions of American citizens are to be educated for life's work, their political intelligence and integrity are to be developed, their conditions of living are to be improved, their virtue is to be guarded, their ideals are to be enlarged. These people are to be served by state and school, by the power of co-operative enterprise, by church and the ministers of the Christian faith. They are to continue to send choice youth to the cities for replenishment and for leadership. These millions are to retain a place in advancing American life consistent with our traditions and our hopes.

The need of the church in all these great enterprises of rural society constitutes an appeal. Useless the wealth wrung from the soil unless the welfare of the soil worker be maintained. Valueless the material elements of human life unless the human spirit be enlarged. But vanity and vexation of heart are

our farm labors and plans unless the spirit of service and of brotherhood is to dominate. And shall we partake of God's bounty without rendering to him our fealty? Shall the guardians of an ancient faith permit the Saracens of materialism, of worldliness, of love of money, of adoration of power, to capture the citadels of worship, and of praise, and of loving loyalty to all that is divine and eternal? These issues are real and they are vital. Let no pressure of appeal from city slum, from lumber camp or mining village, from immigrants' need, from bleeding, impoverished Armenia, from the newly pulsing China, or from the islands of the sea—heart-wringing and burning as these calls may be—let none of these things blind us to the slow-moving but irresistible tides of human life that ebb and flow in the homes and institutions of our American farm people.

The charms of the pastor's life in the open country constitute a call. For this cause many are called and few are chosen. But for that man who loves the open, whose heart responds to the soft music of meadow and field, whose ear is attuned to the rhythm of the seasons, who feels the romance of intelligent care of soil

and plant and animal—to that man the rural parish offers rewards beyond all price.

> Dear uplands, Chester's favorable fields,
> My large unjealous loves, many yet one—
> A grave good-morrow to your Graces, all,
> Fair tilth and fruitful seasons!
>
> Lo, how still!
> The midmorn empties you of men, save me;
> Speak to your lover, meadows! None can hear.
> I lie as lies yon placid Brandywine,
> Holding the hills and heavens in my heart
> For contemplation.
>
> —SIDNEY LANIER.

The opportunities offered by the country parish for breadth of culture constitute a call not usually put down in the list of reasons for being a country clergyman. One does not need constant access to great libraries in order to acquire culture. Culture is appreciation of environment. It is a process of soul-ripening. Knowledge is merely the crude material upon which culture works. Reading is only one door by which culture enters. Close observation, meditation, pondering in the heart, much thinking are the favorite tools of culture. Do you desire time to read in peace? Do you wish for a chance to weigh and meditate? Do you like to stand close to men at work? Do

you want to know the secret places of the Most High? Do you gain wisdom from the sermons preached by the rocks, joy from the songs of little rivers, peace from the evening hymns that arise from meadow and woodland? Then do not hesitate to seek these things in the country parish. From your rural watch-tower you, also, may observe the swift march of affairs, keep alive to great movements, see the drift of great human tides. You may in the country, also, learn to appreciate the physical and spiritual environment that makes for the welfare of men and women, secure real personal growth, develop sound culture.

It is worth one's while to be in touch with leaders of thought and action. The stimulus that comes to the pastor of a large city church from such associations is real and vital. But for the man who can detect life's veneer, who loves to examine the fiber of character, who knows human nature, the country parish offers ample chance for interest and profit. For, commonly, rural people are natural, their native instincts are strong, their tastes are simple, their speech is direct. To him who likes this sort of human contact the country parish calls.

The very presence of the difficulties in country church work formulates a distinct call to men who like to conquer circumstance. The problem of prosperous church life in rural communities is not an easy problem. The successful minister in those communities cannot enjoy a life of ease. Vexation of spirit may become his portion. But the joy of overcoming an untoward situation may also be his. Some men will be attracted to the country parish just because it is a hard field.

The dearth of men constitutes a call. The fields are white for the harvest. Many laborers present themselves. But some of them come out merely for a summer's practice. Some have ancient implements. Some do not know wheat from corn. Relatively few deliberately mean to make these open fields their life scene, and fewer still have prepared themselves to harvest the crop by modern methods. Do not some of you see, therefore, a rare chance for distinction? A prayer for well-equipped harvesters is going up from all our country-side, and we wait impatiently for the response, "Here am I, send me."

To those men who have the pioneer spirit there comes a strong appeal from the rural

church. For here is a chance for unique work, something different, and yet supremely useful as well as rare. Who will be our explorers, to blaze new trails by which other men may find fresh fields of influence for advancing the kingdom? Nowhere more fully than in the country can a clergyman shepherd his flock by day and by night, know the quality of their meadows, guard their water courses, lead into new and sweet pastures. The splendid opportunities for leadership in the country parish ought to ring in the hearts of young men of power.

The timeliness of a redirected country church work constitutes an appeal. There are large stirrings in all rural affairs. The fields are alive with movements for better farming, for more useful education, for co-operation. As never before, the country minister has efficient allies. The mechanism of socialization is busy; the institutions of agricultural education are pulsing with life; organizations are multiplying in number and in power. And the church at large is stirring. She realizes the herculean task before her. She sees the signs of moral unrest. She observes that the notes of idealism are betimes deadened by the "wearisome sound of the

scythe of time and the trowel of trade." The man who goes to the country parish is captain in the host of a growing army that seeks to command the country-side, as well as to capture cities.

The final and the supreme call from the country parish comes out of the abiding hunger of men and women for religion—religion interpreted in terms of daily toil, common human need, social evolution, justice, and fraternity. In country as well as in city, many men and many women are engaged—often unwittingly or even unwillingly engaged—in the sad business of living outside the pale of religious idealism, seeking to explain life on grounds of expediency, trying to find easy delight for the senses, expending toil and enduring sweat for that which is not bread. But all of them know, in their best moments, that underneath are the Everlasting Arms. Can we, then, afford to neglect half of our countrymen in our efforts to reach men effectively with the new evangel? Shall all these rising tides of life in our rural regions be left to break upon the futile shores of economic gain and personal pleasure? Is it a small and mean task to maintain and enlarge in the country both individual and community

ideals, under the inspiration and guidance of the religious motive, and to help forty millions of rural people to incarnate those ideals in personal and family life, in industrial effort and political development, and in all social relationships?

A GREAT COUNTRY MINISTER

In all the days of the church men have been found who illustrated in their own lives the opportunities that lie before the clergyman in the country parish. At this moment there are men, in all parts of our own land, who see this new call of the country parish and are responding intelligently and gallantly. But one name gives us entrance into such a wealth of inspiration and suggestion that we must pause to review the work and method of the man. You doubtless know the story full well, but it may not be omitted here.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, John Frederick Oberlin, Bachelor of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy of a great university, masterful student and courageous leader, declared that he did "not wish to labor in some comfortable pastoral charge," where he could be at ease; but "the question is, Where can I

be most useful?" God answered his prayer, and at the age of twenty-seven this man, who might have had a powerful church in a great center, entered upon his life task, under the most forbidding conditions, in the Ban-de-la-Roche, among the "blue Alsatian mountains." It was a region with

> six months of winter; at times the cold of the shores of the Baltic; a wind like ice sometimes comes down from the mountain tops . . . . ; the sick and dying are to be visited in remote, wild, solitary places among the forests.

This little parish, set high in the rugged Vosges, consisted of not over one hundred families at the time Oberlin came to it. The region had for centuries been the football of war, its fields had been harried, its manhood drained for martial conflict.

> In all this time it had been a battle for sheer existence. In the short summer season the people gathered barely enough food to sustain their impoverished life through the long winter, only to renew the struggle when the snows melted. With no trades and without industries other than the rudest agriculture, and with no intelligent cultivation of the soil for this, their roads mere by-paths, their streams without bridges,

their food scanty and coarse, what could be looked for but hopeless and hapless lives?[1]

The people were taxed far beyond their power to pay. Their poverty was beyond description. They were practically slaves. They had no schools, and were ignorant to a degree. Physical misery and moral degradation were wedded.

Note the picture of the same parish a half-century later, near the close of this historic pastorate. The hills and valleys of the Ban-de-la-Roche had become fertile and fruitful. Everywhere there were evidences of a prosperous agriculture. Every acre was well tilled. Each homestead had its orchards and flower gardens. Splendid mountain roads and substantial bridges gave access to the great world beyond the hills. Schools flourished, schools in which the pedagogy of Pestalozzi and Froebel was antedated; schools in which were taught nature study, agriculture, civics, aesthetics. A local improvement society concerned itself with de-

[1] For the facts of Oberlin's life and the quotations here given the author is indebted to Professor A. F. Beard of Oberlin College, who in his recent *Story of John Frederick Oberlin* has written a book that should be read and pondered by every country clergyman in America.

veloping the beauty about home and farmstead. An agricultural club flourished. A well-ordered system of irrigation had been installed. Peace and plenty reigned supreme. Thrift marked the labors and savings, intelligence directed the industry of all. Simple but charming houses covered a beautiful family life. Religion served to bind men and women to their fellows and to their God.

The recognized genius in all this transformation was Pastor Oberlin. In Oberlin's closing years, the king of France conferred upon him the medal of the Legion of Honor, for his many efforts which had resulted in making the district "flourishing and happy." The National Agricultural Society decreed him a gold medal for "prodigies accomplished in silence in this almost unknown corner of the Vosges, ... in a district before his arrival almost savage," and into which he had brought "the best methods of agriculture and the purest lights of civilization." An English lady, visiting the region in 1820, writes: "The poor charm me. I have never met with any like them; so much humility, spirituality, and with manners that would do honor to a court." It was all Oberlin's work.

By what miracle was this transformation wrought? By preaching? Yes; Oberlin never failed to prepare his sermons with the greatest care. He was a reader of science, of history, of philosophy. Even in his mountain eyrie he kept in touch with the world's thought. But was it by reading, and study, and faithful preaching alone that the change came? Listen!

Oberlin secured the first schoolhouse by promising that it should cost the people nothing. As a matter of fact, he paid a substantial share of the cost of two schoolhouses out of the savings of a salary of $200 a year. He shouldered a pick and led the work of building the first highway and bridging the mountain stream. He proved that horticulture was practicable in the region by himself planting successful orchards. He introduced new varieties and new crops. He organized societies and clubs. He taught manners and morals. He planned and directed the school work in every detail. In the beginning all of these efforts were opposed most vigorously. Some even tried to intimidate him. He carried every reform against severe opposition. He helped the people in spite of themselves. But in all

his efforts he kept the religious element to the fore. All things were to be done for God as well as for oneself. He himself, while practical in the extreme, was also spiritual to the verge of mysticism.

Rural parishes in America that present the woeful conditions of the Ban-de-la-Roche in 1767 may not be common, though of that let us not be too sure. The same underground work that Oberlin did may not need doing by every rural clergyman. Schools are busy in every parish. Forces of socialization and co-operation are at work. The means of agricultural training are at hand. Yet the underlying philosophy of Oberlin's life work must be the fundamental principle of the great country parish work of the future. Oberlin believed in the unity of life, the marriage of labor and living. He knew that social justice, intelligent toil, happy environment are bound up with the growth of the spirit. They act and react upon one another.

More than a century ago, in an obscure parish among the mountains of Alsatia, a great man labored for a lifetime as a country minister. He knew all the souls in his charge to their core. He loved them passionately. He

refused to leave them for greater reward and easier work. He loved their fields and their mountains. He studied their problems. He toiled for his people incessantly. He transformed their industry and he regenerated their lives. He built a new and permanent rural civilization that endures to this day unspoiled. The parishes about the little village of Waldersbach, nestled among the Vosges Mountains, thus became a laboratory in which the call of the country parish met a deep answer of success and of peace.

A PRESENT CRISIS

There is a new interest in American country life. The love of the out-of-doors is growing. Business men are recognizing afresh the fundamental economic character of the agricultural industry. The solidarity of city and country is seen concretely. The unity of national life is found to consist in developing both urban and rural civilization. Great movements are under way, designed to increase the yield of the soil, to put agriculture on a better business basis, to educate rural youth, to secure co-operative effort among farmers. Is the church also astir in rural places? The country church

has been a saving salt in the development of our great farming areas; is she alive today to these new movements? Is she leading in the campaign for rural progress?

The most ardent friend of the country church must give a sorrowful "No" in reply to these questions. While many individual churches are doing splendid work, the country church as an institution is not awake to her task. She has not realized that wonderful changes are taking place. Science applied to farming is working a revolution in rural life as well as in rural industry. We are entering upon a new era in American agricultural history. But unless the church arouses herself, her peculiar work among country folk will not be done.

The present situation then is nothing less than critical. It is vital that the new country life movements be given a religious content. The leadership of the country church is imperative, if the new streams are to flow in the channels of idealism. Let the church assert its leadership at once. Let it set the pace for rural progress and determine its great issues. There is no time to be lost. The floods are rising. The day is at hand.

WHAT SHALL BE DONE?

What shall we do to arouse the country church, to give it its rightful place among the forces at work for solving the rural problem?

We must ask men to consecrate themselves to life-long service in the country parish. The country church needs men who believe that here is a great task, worthy of high devotion, thorough preparation, intelligent study, patient continuance in well-doing.

We must root out the idea that only inferior men can find a permanent work in the country parish. It needs our strongest and best men, particularly in these critical formative days of a new program for the country church. The issues at stake merit the leadership of great men. Let us do away with even the secret thought that a brilliant theologue has "buried himself" in some obscure farming community. It is his own fault if he remain buried. The seeds of the new rural religious life may be sown in corruption, in dishonor, in weakness; but, please God, they shall bear fruit in incorruption, in glory, and in power. We have a right to ask strong men to put their hands to this plow and not to turn back.

We must go out to the men now toiling in the

rural parishes, with a message of cheer, of co-operation, of encouragement. They are a noble band. They need our aid. Let us help them to grip the new sources of power, to assume a new leadership, to work together for larger ends.

We must appeal to the seminaries, and other training schools for preachers, to send forth men who have formed a well-grounded ambition to explore the resources of this great field and who have qualified themselves for the task—who are well armored for the campaign.

We must go to the colleges, and appeal to strong young men who want hard places, who love to take chances, who have withal the desire to serve their fellows mightily. We must persuade them that here is work that is epoch-making, a man's work, work worth while.

We must appeal to the heroic in young men. Let us not try to show that the country parish is a garden of delight, a place of rest and ease. Rather let its difficulties and puzzling problems constitute a clarion-call to the men of heroic mold. Our fathers met every hard issue in the heroic spirit. They dared the wilds of an unexplored continent to establish a new kingdom of God. They carried the banner of the

church across sea and land and planted it among savages. They kept the church in the van of the army of conquest that has subdued our western forest and prairie. Have their sons poorer vision, smaller courage, weaker wills? We may not believe it. But we must show them that here is really a man's work, that something vital is at stake. We must appeal to high motives, expect large sacrifices.

The critical need just now is for a few strong men of large power to get hold of this country church question in a virile way. It is the time for leadership. We need a score of Oberlins to point the way by actually working out the problem on the field. It is well enough to discuss the problem in its theoretical aspects. It is desirable to organize large movements on behalf of the rural church. But more than all else just now, we need a few men to achieve great results in the rural parish, to re-establish the leadership of the church. No organization can do it. No layman can do it. No educational institution can do it. A preacher must do it—do it in spite of small salary, isolation, conservatism, restricted field, overchurching, or any other devil that shows its face. The call is imperative. Shall we be denied the men?

While we must demand men, single-handed and alone, to meet this call of the country parish, there are two powerful allies that we may ask to our aid. There is always stimulus in a common purpose. Is not the time ripe for a new "rural band"—a group of half a dozen men from the seminary, who find adjacent parishes in a rural region, and there, quietly, co-operatively, persistently, grimly, study the situation, take leadership in all community life, incite the aid of school and Grange, stir lay support, carry on a great campaign for better individual and community life, and do all under the inspiration and guidance of the religious motive? A plan of this sort, carefully considered, discreetly managed, patiently developed, would form the nucleus for a new country church. It needs doing. It can be done. Are there men who will do it?

The time is ripe also for an organized movement on behalf of the country parish, that shall give dignity and direction to the efforts of solitary workers. The country parish is a peculiar field. New methods are needed. Men must be aroused from lethargy. A powerful co-operative enterprise must set standards, educate men, co-ordinate effort.

The country church is indeed calling for men. The prosperous churches in rich farming regions need strong leaders to direct the forces of progress and to lead men to the waters of life. The little white meeting-house on the abandoned New England hillside holds out its arms in mute appeal for men to bring new life. From the cotton fields and mountains of the southland, from the prairies of the central valleys, from the transformed deserts of the West, comes this call for men to serve the country parish.

Let not our eyes be blind to these deep needs of our rural life, nor our ears deaf to the call of the country parish. The time for a great work is at hand. The country church is facing a "present crisis"; therefore let us remember that

> New occasions teach new duties; Time
> makes ancient good uncouth;
> They must upward still, and onward,
> who would keep abreast of Truth;
> Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! We
> ourselves must Pilgrims be,
> Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly
> through the desperate winter sea,
> Nor attempt the Future's portal with
> the Past's blood-rusted key.

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